

THE ARGOSY.

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COURT NETHERLEIGH.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LAST WORDS.

DECEMBER was in, and winter weather lay on the earth.

Court Netherleigh looked out on a lovely view, fantastic as the pictures in a scene of fairyland. The snow clung to the branches of the trees like feathery forms of beauty; icicles sparkled in the sun. A new and fair and strange world might have replaced the old one.

Margery Upton lay on the sofa in her dressing-room; an apartment tastily fitted up. She was able to go into it most days, but she had now given up going down stairs. During the months that had gone on since the autumn and the time of Lady Adela's sojourn, the fatal disease, which had fastened on Miss Upton, had made its silent, persistent ravages, and her condition was now no longer a secret; though few people suspected how very near the end might be. Her warm loose dressing-gown of soft violet silk, for she remained loyal to her favourite colour, and her cap of fine lace shading her face, she lay between the fireplace and the window, gazing at the snowy landscape. She did not look very ill, and Grace Chenevix might be excused for the hopeful thought, now crossing her mind, that perhaps Aunt Margery would rally, after all. Grace had come down to spend a few days with her. She sat on the other side the hearthrug, tatting, the small ivory shuttle passing rapidly through her fingers.

"You do not have this beautiful scene in London, Grace," observed Miss Upton.

"Not often, Aunt Margery. Now and then the trees in the park are so ornamented; once, say, in four or five winters. Of course we never see so beautiful a prospect as this is in its entirety."

"I wonder if our scenery in the next world will be much more

beautiful—or if it will even be anything like this?” came the dreamy remark from the invalid. “Ah, Grace, I suppose I shall soon know now.”

Lady Grace checked a sigh. She thought it best to be cheerful. The shuttle had to be threaded again, and she got up to reach the ball of thread.

“Who was your letter from this morning, Gracie? Annis said you had one: from ‘foreign parts’ she took care to inform me.”

Grace smiled. “Yes, I had, Aunt Margery; I had forgotten it for the moment. It was from Harriet. They are still in Switzerland, and mean to stay there.”

“I thought they were to go to Rome for Christmas.”

“But Adela objects to it so much, Harriet says; so they intend to remain where they are, in the desolate old château. They have made it as air-tight as they can, and keep up great wood fires. Adela shrinks from meeting the world, and Rome is unusually full of English.”

“How is Adela?”

“Just the same. Worse, if anything; more sad and spiritless. Harriet begins to fear she will become really ill; she seems to have a sort of low fever upon her.”

“Poor girl!” sighed Margery Upton. “How she has blighted her life! I had a letter, too, this morning,” she resumed, “from Mrs. Lynn. She is very ill; thinks she cannot last much longer—Francis told me so when he was here last week. I wonder”—in a half whisper—“which of us will go first, she or I? I wonder whether either of us will last out to see Christmas?”

“Was Mr. Grubb here last week, Aunt Margery?”

“For a few hours. I like him to come to me sometimes; he is a great favourite of mine. Grace, do you know what I have often wished—that that old story, that he proposed for you, had been fact instead of misapprehension. With you he would have found the happiness he missed with Adela.”

A flush passed over Grace’s fair, placid face. She bent her head: there appeared to be a knot in the tatting.

“Marriages are said, you know, to be made in heaven,” she remarked, looking up with a smile; “so I conclude that all must have been right. Were the years to come over again, Adela would act very differently. She—oh, Aunt Margery, the beautiful feathery sprays are disappearing!”

“Ay; the sun has come out, and melts the snow. Few pleasant things last long in this world, child; something or other comes to mar them. But I thought you meant to go to Moat Grange this morning, Grace. You should start at once; it has struck eleven.”

“I said I should like to see Selina, and to call on Mrs. Cleveland on the way.”

"Well, do so. Selina will receive you with open arms. She must be amazingly lonely, shut up in that dreary house from year's end to year's end. They see no company."

Grace put her tatting into its little basket, and rose. "But are you sure you shall not feel dull at being left, Aunt Margery?" she stayed to ask.

"I never feel dull, Grace."

Barely had Grace started on her walk when the maid came to the dressing-room to say the Rector had called. "Will you see him, Miss Margery?" she inquired.

"Yes, Annis, I wish to see him," was Miss Upton's reply; as she rose from her recumbent position on the sofa and sat down upon it. Ann folded a gray chenille shawl over her mistress's knees, put a footstool under her feet, and sent Mr. Cleveland up.

After a short while given to subjects of more vital importance, Miss Upton began to talk of her worldly affairs, induced to it possibly by a question of the Rector's, as to whether all things were settled.

"You mean my will, I suppose," she answered, slightly smiling. "Yes, it is settled and done with. Will you be surprised to hear that I made my will within a month of coming into this estate, and that it has never been altered?"

"Indeed!" he remarked.

"I added a codicil to it last year, specifying the legacies I wish to bequeath; but the substance of the will, with its bequest, Court Netherleigh, remains unchanged."

Mr. Cleveland opened his lips to speak, and closed them again. In the impulse of the moment he was about to say "To whom have you left it?" But he remembered that it was a question he could not properly put.

"You were about to ask me who it is that will inherit this property, and you do not like to do so," she said, nodding to him pleasantly. "Well, it ——"

"I beg your pardon for it," he interrupted. "The thought did arise to me, and I nearly forgot myself."

"And very natural that it should arise to you. I am about to tell you all about it. I meant to do so before my death: as well now as any other time."

"Is it Lord Acorn?"

"No, that it is not," she replied, in a quick decisive tone, as if the very suggestion did not please her. "Lord Acorn and his wife have chosen to entertain the notion; though they have not had any warranty for it from me, but the contrary: understand me, please, *the contrary*. Court Netherleigh is willed to Francis Grubb."

Mr. Cleveland's surprise was so great that for the moment he could only gaze at the speaker. He doubted if he heard correctly.

"To Francis Grubb!" he exclaimed.

"Yes; to him, and no other. I see how surprised you are. The world will feel surprise also."

"But Mr. Grubb is so rich!—he does not want Court Netherleigh," debated the Rector: not that he had any wish to cavil with the decree; he simply spoke out the thought that occurred to him.

"Were Mr. Grubb in possession of all the wealth of the Indies, he would still inherit Court Netherleigh," said she, looking across at her listener.

"I see. He is a favourite of yours; and most deservedly so."

"Cast your thoughts outwards, Mr. Cleveland, to the circle known to you and to me," she continued: "can you point out one single individual of it who has any abstract right to succeed to Court Netherleigh?"

"No, I cannot," he said, after a pause. "It is only because I have been accustomed to think it would become Lord Acorn's—that I feel surprise."

"Lord Acorn would only make ducks and drakes of it; we all know that. And, to return to the subject of right, or claim, he does not possess so much of that as does Mr. Grubb."

Mr. Cleveland waited. He could not quite understand.

"Listen," said Miss Upton. "We three girls—you know whom I mean—were the only relatives Sir Francis Netherleigh had in the world. The other two married; I was left; and, after my mother's death, I came to live here entirely. One day, during his fatal illness—it was the very last day he ever came down stairs—he bade me put aside my work and listen to him. It was a lovely summer's afternoon, and we were sitting in the blue drawing-room, at the open window, he in his easy chair. Uncle Francis—as we three girls had always called him, though, as you know, he was no uncle of ours—began speaking to me for the first time of his approaching death. I burst into tears, and that did not please him: he could be impatient at times. 'I want you to listen to me rationally, Margery, not to cry,' he said; 'and you must have known for some time that I was going.' So I dried my tears as well as I could, and he went on to tell me that it was I who would succeed to Court Netherleigh. I was indeed surprised! I could not believe it; just as you did not believe me now, when I told you I had bequeathed it to Francis Grubb; and I said something about not taking it—that I was not of sufficient consequence to be the mistress of Court Netherleigh. That put him out—little things did so at the last—and he testily asked me who else there was to take it. 'I have neither son nor nephew, more's the pity,' he went on, 'no relative of any kind, except you three girls. Had Catherine Grant not married she would have had Court Netherleigh,' he continued, 'but she put herself out of the pale. Betsy Cleveland has done the same; and there's only you.' He then passed on to say how he should wish the place to be kept up; that I

was to do this and that to it. 'And to whom am I to leave it?' I said to him in turn, feeling greatly perplexed; 'I shall not know what to do with it.' 'That is chiefly what I want to talk to you about,' he answered. 'Perhaps you will marry, and have a son——' 'No, Uncle Francis, I shall never marry—never!' I interrupted. For I had had my little romance in early life," broke off Miss Margery, looking at the Rector, "and that kind of thing had closed for me. You have heard something of it, I fancy?"

Mr. Cleveland nodded, and she resumed.

"Uncle Francis saw I was in earnest; that no heir to Court Netherleigh would ever spring from me. 'In that case,' he said, 'I must suggest someone else,' and there he came to a pause. 'There's Lord Acorn,' I ventured to say, 'Betsy's husband; he——' 'Hold your tongue, Margery, unless you can talk better sense!' he cried out in anger. 'Could I allow Court Netherleigh to fall into the hands of a spendthrift? If George Acorn came into the property to-morrow, by the end of the year there'd be nothing left of it: every acre would be mortgaged away. I charge you,' he solemnly added, 'not to allow George Acorn, or that son of his, little Denne, or any other son he may hereafter have, ever to come into Court Netherleigh. You understand, Margery, I forbid it. Putting aside Acorn's spendthrift nature, which would be an insurmountable barrier, and I daresay his son inherits it, I should not care for a peer to own the property; rather someone who will take the name of Netherleigh, and in whom the baronetcy may perhaps be revived.' You now see," added Miss Upton, glancing at the earnest face of the Rector, "why I am debarred, even though it had been my wish, from bequeathing Court Netherleigh to Lord Acorn."

"I do, indeed."

"To go back to my uncle. 'Failing children of your own, Margery,' he continued, 'there is only one I can name as your successor; there's no other person living to name—and that is the little son of Catherine Grubb.' 'Uncle Francis!' I interrupted, in very astonishment, 'Catherine's son!' 'Yes; why not?' he answered. 'She offended me, but he has not; and I hear, for I have made enquiries through Pencot, that he is a fine noble little lad; and his name, too, is Francis—Pencot has obtained all necessary information. In the years to come, when he shall be a good man—for Pencot tells me no pains are being spared to make him *that*—perhaps also a great one, he may come here and reign as my successor, a second Sir Francis Netherleigh. In any case he must take the name with the property; it must be made a condition: do not forget that.' I promised that I would not forget it, but I could not get over the surprise I felt. This boy was the son of Christopher Grubb; and it was to him, to his calling, so much objection was raised in the family."

"It does appear rather contradictory on the face of it," agreed Mr. Cleveland.

"Yes. Uncle Francis saw what was in my mind. 'Were the past to come over again,' he observed, 'I might be less harsh with Catherine, less intolerant to him.' 'But Mr. Grubb *is* in trade, is a merchant, just as he was then,' I returned, wonderingly. 'Margery,' said Uncle Francis, 'when our days in this world draw to their close, and we stand on the threshold of another, ideas change. The spirit changes, and the aspect of things changes with it. We see then that the inordinate value we have set on worldly distinctions may have been, to say the least of it, exaggerated; while the principles of right, of justice, become more weighty. What little right or claim there is in the matter, with regard to a successor to Court Netherleigh, lay with Catherine Grant. I have had to substitute you, Margery, for her; but it is *right* that her son should come in after you. I also find that Mr. Grubb's business is of a high standing, altogether different from the ideas we formed of it."

"How did any right lie with Catherine Grant—more than with you or Elizabeth Cleveland?" asked the Rector.

"In this way: Catherine Grant was the most nearly related to Sir Francis. Her mother was his first cousin, whereas my mother and Betsy's mother were but his second cousins. Catherine also was the eldest of the three, by about a year. So you perceive he spoke with reason—that the right of succession, if any right existed, lay with her."

Mr. Cleveland nodded.

"'After you come into possession here, Margery, do not lose time in making your will,' continued Uncle Francis. 'To-morrow I will write down a few particulars to guide you, which you can, at the proper time, show to Pencot. The lad's name, Francis Grubb, will be put in as your successor, and when he comes here, in later years, he must change it to Francis Netherleigh.' 'But,' I rejoined to this, the thought striking me, 'suppose the little boy should grow up a bad man, a man of evil repute, what then?' 'Then,' he said, striking his hand emphatically upon the elbow of his chair, 'I charge you to destroy your first will and make a fresh one. Look out in the world for yourself, and choose a worthy successor—not any one of the Acorns, mind, I have interdicted that; some gentleman of fair and estimable character, who will do his duty earnestly to God and to his neighbour, and who will take my name. *Not* the baronetcy. Unless he were of blood relationship to me, though ever so remote, no plea would exist for petitioning for that. But I think better things of this little boy in question,' he added quickly; 'instinct whispers that he will be found worthy.' As he *is*," emphatically concluded Miss Upton. "And I intend him to be, and hope he will be, a second Sir Francis Netherleigh. I have put things in train for it.

"It is a rather singular coincidence, not unlike a link in a chain," she went on, dreamily, "that the present Prime Minister should be an old habitué of Court Netherleigh; many a week in his boyhood did

he pass here with Uncle Francis, who was very kind to him. We three girls, silly things that we were, used to quarrel amicably which should call him sweetheart. He has continued his friendship with me unto this day; coming down to visit me occasionally. I made a confidant of him during his last visit, telling him what I am now telling you, and I asked him to get this accomplished. He promised faithfully to do so, for our old friendship's sake, and in remembrance of his obligations to Uncle Francis, who had been a substantial friend to him. It would not be difficult, he said, Mr. Grubb assenting—whom, by the way, he esteems greatly. Therefore, you will, I hope, at no very prolonged period after my death, see him reigning here, Sir Francis Netherleigh."

"Has Mr. Grubb assented?" asked the Rector.

Miss Margery shook her head and smiled. "Mr. Grubb knows nothing whatever about the matter. He has no more idea that he will inherit Court Netherleigh than I had that I should inherit it before that revelation to me by Uncle Francis. Were I to say to him, 'Guess who it is, of all the world, that will come in after me,' he would no doubt guess every individual in it before himself, beginning with Lord Acorn. He will know nothing until I am dead. I have written him a farewell letter, which will then reach him, explaining all things; just as I have written out a statement for the world, disclosing the commands laid upon me by Uncle Francis, lest I should be accused of caprice, and—possibly—Mr. Grubb of cupidity."

"You are content to leave him your successor?"

"More than content. I look around and ask myself who else is so worthy. After Uncle Francis's death I was not content. No, I confess it, Catherine had offended all our prejudices, and her child shared them in my mind. But I never thought of disputing the charge laid upon me, and my will was made in the boy's favour. From time to time, as the years passed on, Mr. Pencot brought me reports of him—that he was growing up all that could be wished for. Still, I could not quite put away my prejudice; and whether I should have sought to make acquaintance with him, had chance not brought it about, I cannot say. I met him first at a railway-station."

"Did you!" cried Mr. Cleveland, who had never heard of that day's meeting.

"I was going down to Cheltenham with Annis and Marcus, and our train came to grief near Reading; the passengers had to get out while the damage, something to an axle, was tinkered up. Francis Grubb was coming up from the Acorns' place in Oxfordshire; it was during the time he was courting Adela, and the accident to my train stopped his. I was sitting by the wayside disconsolately enough on my little wooden bonnet-box, when one of the nicest-looking and randest men, for a young man, I ever saw, came up and politely

asked if he could be of any service to me. My liking, my heart, so to say, went out to him at once, his manner was so winning, his countenance so good and noble. Something in his eyes struck me as familiar—you know how beautiful they are—when in another moment my own eyes fell on the name on his hand bag, 'C. Grubb.' Then I remembered that the eyes were Catherine's; and I knew that I saw before me her son and my heir."

"And your prejudice against him ceased from that time," laughed the Rector.

"Entirely, completely. I have learnt to love him, to be proud of him. Catherine cannot feel more pride in her son than I feel in him. But I have never given him the slightest hint that he will inherit Court Netherleigh. Not that I have never felt tempted to do so. When my young Lady Adela has jeered at his name, Grubb, in her contemptuous way, it has been on the tip of my tongue more than once to say to her, He will bear a better sometime. And I have told himself once—or twice—that he was quite safe in letting Acorn borrow money on Court Netherleigh. He is, you see, seeing that it is himself who will come into it: though, of course, he took it to mean that Acorn would."

Mr. Cleveland drew a long breath. These matters had surprised him, but in his heart of hearts he felt thankful that the fine, the rich, the well-cared-for demesnes would become Francis Grubb's and not thriftless George Acorn's.

"Never a word of this abroad until I am gone, my old friend," she enjoined, "not even to your wife; you understand that?"

"I understand it perfectly, dear Miss Upton, and will observe it."

"You will not have long to wait."

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN THE COLD CHÂTEAU.

A DRAUGHTY old château in Switzerland. Not that it need have been draughty, for it lay at the foot of a mountain that sheltered it from the east winds. But the doors did not fit, and the windows rattled, after the custom of most old châteaux; and so the winter air crept in. It stood in a secluded spot, quite out of the beaten tracks of travellers; and it looked down upon one of the most glorious prospects that even that favoured land can boast.

The prospect in part, and in part the very moderate rent asked for the house, had induced Sir Sandy MacIvor to take it for the autumn months. The MacIvors, though descended from all the kings of Scotland, could not boast of anything very great in the shape of income. Sir Sandy's was small, and he and his wife Lady

Harriet, formerly Harriet Chenevix, had some trouble to make both ends meet. The little baronet was fond of quoting the old saying, that he had to cut his coat according to his cloth. Therefore, when Lady Adela went to them for a prolonged stay, the ample allowance made for her to Sir Sandy was most welcome.

Upon the close of Adela's short visit to Court Netherleigh in the autumn, she returned to her mother. That visit had not been productive of any good result as regarded her cheerfulness of mind and manner; for her life seemed only to grow more dreary. Lady Acorn did not approve of this, and took care daily to let Adela know she did not, dealing out to her sundry reproaches. One day when Adela was unusually low spirited, or, as Lady Acorn called it, grumpy, the Countess made use of a threat—that she should be transported to that gloomy Swiss fastness the MacIvors had settled themselves into, and stop there until she mended her manners.

A chance word sometimes bears fruit. Adela, a faint light rising to her eyes as she heard this, lifted her voice eagerly. "Mother, let me go; send me thither as soon as you please," she said. "It will at least be better for me there than here, for I shall be out of the world."

"Out of the world!" snapped Lady Acorn. "You can't be much more out of it than you are down here in Oxfordshire."

"Yes, I can. The neighbours, those who are at their seats in the country, come in to see us, and papa sometimes brings people home from town. Let me go to Harriet."

It was speedily decided. Lady Acorn, tart though she was with Adela, had her welfare at heart, and she thought the thorough change might be of benefit to her. An old friend, who chanced to be going abroad, took charge of Lady Adela to Geneva, Sir Sandy MacIvor and his wife met her there, and took her back with them to the château.

That was in October. Adela found the château as isolated as she could well desire, and therefore she was pleased with it, and she told Sir Sandy and Harriet she was glad to have come.

They had never thought of staying in this château for the winter; they meant to go to Rome early in December. But as that month approached, Adela evinced a great dislike to move. She would not go to Rome to encounter the English there, she told them; she would stay where she was. It a little perplexed the MacIvors: Adela had grown now so weak and low-spirited that they did not like to cross her, or to insist upon it that she *must* go; neither did they care to give her up as their inmate, for her allowance was of consequence to them.

"What if we make up our minds to stay here for the winter, Harriet?" at length said Sir Sandy, who was as easy-tempered, genial-hearted a little laird as could be met with in or out of Scotland; though he stood but five feet high in his shoes, and nothing could

be seen of his face save his small perky nose standing out of the mass of bright yellow hair which adorned it.

"It will be so cold," grumbled Harriet. "Think of all these draughts."

"They won't hurt," said the laird, who had been bred to such things, his paternal stronghold in the Highlands not being altogether air-tight. "I'll nail some list over the wind-slits, and we'll lay in a good stock of wood and keep up grand fires. It must be as you decide, of course, dear; but Adela can't be left here alone, and if we say she must go with us to Rome, she may fret herself into a fever."

"She is doing that as it is," said Harriet. "We *might* stay here, of course—and we should get the place for an old song during the cold months. Perhaps we had better remain. Though I should like to have been in Rome for the Christmas festivities, and, later, for the carnival."

"We will go next Christmas instead of this," said Sir Sandy.

As they had no children they were not tied to their Scottish home and could lay their plans freely. It was decided to remain in the château for the winter, and Sir Sandy began hammering at the doors and windows.

So they settled down contentedly enough; and, cold though it was in spite of the list and the crackling wood fires, which certainly gave out more sparks than heat, Sir Sandy and his wife made the best of it.

It was more than could be said of Lady Adela. She not only did not make the best of things, but did not try to do so. Not that she complained of the cold, or the heat, or appeared to feel either. All seemed as one to her.

Her room was large, its great old-fashioned sofa and its heavy fauteuils covered with amber velvet. Some uncomfortable looking furniture stood about—mahogany tables and consoles with cold white marble tops. The walls of the room were papered with a running landscape, representing green plains, rivers, blue mountains, sombre pine trees, castles, and picturesque peasants at work in a vineyard. In a recess, shut off with heavy curtains, stood the bed; it was, in fact, a bed-room and sitting-room combined, as is so frequently the case on the Continent.

In a dress of black silk and crape, worn for Margery Upton, who had died the day after Christmas-day, Lady Adela sat in this room near the wood fire. January was wearing to its close. She leaned back in the great yellow arm-chair in listless apathy, her wasted hands lying inertly on her lap, a warm cashmere shawl drawn round her, and two scarlet spots on her once blooming cheeks. The low fever, that, as predicted by Lady Harriet weeks and weeks ago, she was fretting herself into, had too surely attacked her. And she had not seemed in the least to care whether or not she died of it.

"If I die, will my death be sudden?" she one day startled the Swiss doctor by asking him.

"You will not die, you will get well," replied Monsieur Le Brun. "If you will only be reasonable, be it understood, and second our efforts to make you so, by wishing for it yourself," he added.

"I do wish it," she murmured; though her tone was apathetical enough. "But I said to you *if* I die—and I want the question answered, sir. Would there be time to send for any friends from England that I may wish to see."

"Ample time, miladi."

"Harriet," whispered she to her sister that same night, "mind you send for Mr. Grubb when I get into that state that I cannot recover from—if I do get into it. *Will you?*"

"Good gracious, what next!" retorted Harriet. "Who says you will not recover?"

"I could not die in peace without seeing my husband—without asking for his forgiveness," pleaded the poor invalid, bitter tears of regret for the past slowly coursing down her cheeks. "You will be sure to send in time, won't you, Harriet?"

"Yes, yes, I promise it," answered Harriet, humouring the fancy; and she set herself to kiss and soothe her sister.

Lady Harriet MacIvor, who resembled her mother more than any of the rest, both in person and quickness of temper, had been tart enough with Adela before the illness declared itself, freely avowing that she had no patience with people who fretted themselves sick; but when the fever had really come she became a tender and efficient nurse.

The sickness and the danger passed—though, of danger, there had not perhaps been very much—and Adela was up again. With the passing, Lady Harriet resumed her tendency to set the world and its pilgrims to rights, especially Adela. January was well on now.

The fever had left her very weak. In fact, it had not yet wholly taken itself away. She would recline in the large easy chair, utterly inert, day after day, recalling dreams of the past. Thinking of the luxurious home she had lost, one that might have been all brightness; picturing how she would do this and that to render it so, were the opportunity still hers.

For hours she would lose herself in recollections of the child she had lost—the little boy, George. A rush of fever would pass through her veins as she recalled her behaviour at its baptism: her scornful rejection of her husband's name, Francis; her unseemly interruption from her bed to the clergyman that the name should be George. How she yearned after the little child now! Had he lived—why, surely her husband would not have put her away from him! A man may not, and does not, put away the mother of his child; it could never have been. Would she have had the child—or he? Would he have kept it, or allowed her to take it? No, no; with that

precious, living tie between them, his and hers, he could not have thrust his wife away from him. Oh, surely, surely ! had that poor child but lived, he would have exercised compassion. Thus she would lie, tormenting herself with deceitful fantasies that could never be, and wake up with a shudder to the miserable reality.

Enough of the fever lingered yet to tinge with hectic the cheeks of her white face, and to heat her trembling hands. But for one thought Adela would not have cared whether she died or lived—at least, she told herself so in her mind's misery ; and that thought was that, if she died, her husband might take another wife. A wife who would give him back what she herself had not given—love for love. Since Miss Upton, perhaps unwittingly, had breathed that suggestion, it had not left Adela night or day.

How bitterly she regretted the past none knew, or ever would know. During these weeks of illness, before the fever and since, she had leisure, and to spare, to dwell upon her conduct in it ; to repent of it ; to pray to Heaven for pardon for it. The approach of possible death, the stinging presence of hopeless misery, had brought Adela to that Refuge which she had never sought or found before, an ever-merciful God. Never again, even were it possible that she should once more mingle with the world, could she be the frivolous, heartless, unchristian woman she had been—not to speak of graver sins. Nothing in a small way had ever surprised Lady Harriet so much, as to find Adela get out her Bible and Prayer-book and keep them near her.

She sat to day, buried as usual in the past, the bitter anguish its remembrance always brought her rending her soul. We are told in holy writ that the heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked. The heart of woman is undoubtedly contradictory. When Adela was Mr. Grubb's wife she had done her best to scorn and despise him, to persuade herself she hated him : now that he was lost to her for ever, she had grown to love him, passionately as ever man was loved by woman. The very fact that relations between them could never be renewed but fostered this love. For Lady Adela knew better than to deceive herself with vain hopes ; she knew that to cherish them would be the veriest mockery, that when Francis Grubb threw her off, it was for ever.

Many a moment did she spend now regretting that she had not died in the fever. It would at least have brought about a last interview ; for Harriet would have kept her word and sent for him.

"Better for me to die than live," she murmured to herself, lifting her fevered hand. "I could have died happily with his forgiving kisses on my lips. Whereas to live is nothing but pain ; weariness—and who knows how many years my life will last ?"

Davy came in ; a tumbler in her hand containing an egg beaten up with wine and milk. Davvy did not choose to abandon her mistress in her sickness and misfortunes, but Davvy considered

herself the most ill-used lady's maid that fate could produce. Buried alive in this dismal, bleak place in a foreign country, where the companions with whom she consorted, the other domestics, spoke a language that was barbarous and unintelligible, Davvy wondered when it would end.

"I don't want it," said Adela, turning from the glass and from Davvy.

"But Lady Harriet says you must take it, my lady. She put the wine in herself, and bade me run up with it while it was warm. You'll never get your strength up, my lady, if you refuse nourishment."

"I don't care to get my strength up. If you'd bring me some wine and water, Davvy, instead, I could drink that. Or some tea—or lemonade. I am very thirsty."

"And what good is there in tea or lemonade?" returned Davvy, who ventured to contend now as she never had when her lady was in health, coaxing her also sometimes as if she were a child. "Lady Harriet said if you would not take this from me, my lady, she should have to come herself. And she does not want to come; she's busy."

To hear that Harriet was busy seemed something new. "What is she busy over?" languidly asked Adela.

"Talking," answered Davvy. "Some English traveller has turned out of his way to call on her and Sir Sandy, my lady, and he is giving them all the home news."

"Oh," was the indifferent comment of Lady Adela. Home news was nothing to her now. And, to put an end to Davvy's importunity, she drank the refreshment without further objection.

Margery Upton had died and was buried: and her will, when it became known, created a nine days' wonder in London. Amidst those assembled to hear its reading, the mourners, who had just returned from the churchyard, none was more utterly astonished than Mr. Grubb. Never in his whole life had such an idea—that he would be the inheritor of Court Netherleigh—occurred to him. Miss Upton's statement of why it was left to him, as explained by her by word of mouth to Mr. Cleveland, was read out after the will; and Francis Grubb found a private letter, written by her to himself, put into his hand.

Lord Acorn was similarly astonished. Intensely so. Unpleasantly so. Though, in his *débonnaire* manner, he carried it off with easy indifference, not letting his mortification appear. Perhaps he had not in his heart felt so sure of Court Netherleigh as he had allowed the world to think: Miss Upton's warnings might not have been quite lost upon him. Falling himself, he would rather Francis Grubb had it than anyone; there might be no trouble about those over-due bonds; though Lord Acorn, always sanguine, had not allowed himself to dream of such a catastrophe as this.

Perhaps the most unwelcome minor item in the affair to Lord Acorn, was having to carry the news to his wife at home. It was evening when he got there; and Mr. Grubb having travelled up together: for the easy-natured peer did not intend to turn the cold shoulder to his son-in-law because he had supplanted him.

"Will you give me a bit of dinner, Frank?" asked the Earl, as they got into a cab together at the terminus, only too willing to put off the evil quart d'heure with my lady as long as might be.

"I will give it you, and welcome, if there is any to give," smiled Mr. Grubb. "I left no orders for dinner to-day, not knowing when I should be back."

Alighting in Grosvenor Square, they found some dinner was to be had. Afterwards, Lord Acorn went home. His wife, attired in one of Mme. Damereau's best black silk gowns, garnished with a crape apron, was sitting in the small drawing-room, all impatience.

"Well, you *are* late!" cried she. "What can have kept you until now?"

"It is only ten o'clock," replied the Earl, drawing a chair to the fire. "At work, Gracie!" he added, turning to his daughter, who sat at the table, busy with her tatting.

"Only ten o'clock!" snapped the Countess. "I expected you at five or six. And now—how are things left? I suppose we have Court Netherleigh?"

"Well, no; we have not," quietly replied Lord Acorn.

"*Not!*"

"Not at all. Grubb is made the heir. He has Court Netherleigh—and is to take the name."

Lady Acorn's face, in its petrified astonishment, its righteous indignation, would have made a model for Sir David Wilkie. Not for a couple of minutes did she speak; voice and words alike failed her.

"The deceitful wretch!" broke from her at length. "To play the sneak with Margery in that way!"

"Don't waste your breath over a mistake, Betsy. Grubb knew nothing about it; is more surprised than you are. Court Netherleigh was willed to him when Margery first came into it; when he was a young lad. She but carried out the directions of Sir Francis Netherleigh."

Lady Acorn was beginning to breathe again. But she was not the less angry.

"I don't care. It is no better than a swindle. How *deceitful* Margery must have been!"

"She kept counsel—if you mean that. As to being deceitful—no, I don't see it. She never did, or would, admit that the estate would come to us; discouraged the idea, in fact."

"All the same, it is a frightful blow. We were *reckoning* on it. Was nobody in her confidence?"

"Nobody whatever, save the old lawyer, Pincot. Two or three weeks before she died she disclosed all to Cleveland in a confidential interview. As it is not ourselves, I am heartily glad it's Grubb."

"What has she done with all her accumulated money?" tartly went on her ladyship. "She must have saved a heap of it, living in the inexpensive way she did!"

"Yes, there is a pretty good lot of that," equably replied the Earl. "It is left to one and another; legacies here, legacies there. I don't come in for one."

"No! What a shame!"

"You do, though," resumed Lord Acorn, stretching out his boots to the warmth of the fire. "You get ten thousand pounds."

The words were to the Countess as a very sop in the pan. Her fiery face became a little calmer.

"Is it so?" she asked.

"Quite so," nodded the Earl. "You don't get it in a lump, though, without conditions. Only the interest for life; the sum itself then goes to Grace, here. I congratulate you, Gracie, my dear."

Grace let fall her shuttle; her colour rose. "Oh, papa! And—and—what do my sisters have?" she added, ever, in her unselfishness, thinking of others.

"Mary, Harriet, and Frances get a thousand pounds each; Sarah and Adela only some trinkets as a remembrance. I suppose Margery thought they were well married and did not require money."

"And, papa, who else comes in?" asked Grace, glancing across at her mother, who sat beating her foot on the carpet.

"Who else? Let me see. Thomas Cleveland has two thousand pounds. And Mrs. Dalrymple, the elder, has a thousand. And several of Margery's servants are provided for. And—and I think that's about all I remember."

"The furniture at Court Netherleigh?" interrupted Lady Acorn. "Who takes that?"

"Grubb; he takes everything pertaining to the house and estate; everything that was Sir Francis Netherleigh's. He is left residuary legatee. Margery Upton has only willed away what was her own of right."

"As if he wanted it!" grumbled Lady Acorn, giving a twitch to her new apron.

"The less one needs things, the more one gets them, as it seems to me. The baronetcy is to be renewed in him, Betsy."

"The baronetcy! In *him*!"

"Sir Francis wished it. There will not be much delay in the matter, either. Margery Upton put things en train for it before she died."

Lady Acorn could only reply by a stare; and there ensued a pause.

"The idiot that little minx Adela has shown herself!" was her final comment. "Court Netherleigh, it seems, would have been hers."

The little minx Adela, wasting away with fever in her Swiss abode, knew nothing of all this, and cared less. But the barest items of news concerning it came to the MacIvors; Grace wrote to Harriet to say that Court Netherleigh had been willed to Mr. Grubb, not to her father, but in that first letter she gave no details. That much was told to Adela. She aroused herself sufficiently to ask who had Court Netherleigh, and was told that Margery Upton had left it to Mr. Grubb.

"I knew he was a great favourite of hers," was all the comment she made; and but for the sudden flush, Lady Harriet might have thought the news was perfectly indifferent to her: and she made no further allusion to it, then or afterwards.

But of the particulars, I say, Sir Sandy and Lady Harriet remained in ignorance, for Grace did not write again. Nobody else wrote. And their extreme surprise at Mr. Grubb's inheritance had become a thing of the past, when one day a traveller, recently from England, found out them and the old château. It was Captain Frederic Cust, brother to the John Cust who stuttered. The Custs and the Acorns had always been very intimate; the young Cust lads, there were six of them, and the Ladies Chenevix had played and quarrelled together as boys and girls. Captain Cust knew all about the Court Netherleigh inheritance, and supplied the information lacking, until then, to Sir Sandy and Lady Harriet MacIvor. No wonder Davvy had said that Lady Harriet was too busy to go up stairs: she was as fond of talking as her mother.

And so, the abuse they had been mutually lavishing upon Mr. Grubb in private for these two or three past weeks they found to be unmerited. He was the lucky inheritor, it is true, but through no complicity of his own.

"You might have known that," said Captain Cust, upon Lady Harriet's candidly avowing this. "Grubb is the most honourable man living; he would not do an underhand deed to be made king of England to-morrow. I am surprised you could think it of him for a moment, Harriet."

"You be quiet, Fred," she retorted. "It was not an unnatural thought. The best of men will stretch a point of conscience when such a property as Court Netherleigh is in question."

"Grubb would not. And he could have bought such a place any day, had he a mind to do it."

"And to take up the baronetcy! You are sure that is true?"

"Sure and certain. And I wish him joy with all my heart! There's not one of nous autres in the social world but would welcome him into our order with drums and trumpets."

Lady Harriet laughed. "You are just the goose you used to be, Fred."

"No doubt," assented Captain Frederic. "Where's the use of being anything better in such a silly world as this? Your wife has always paid me compliments, MacIvor, since the time when we were in pinafores."

"Just as she does me," nodded little Sir Sandy. "And how is Mr. Grubb?—I liked him, too, Captain. Does he still keep up that great big establishment in Grosvenor Square, all for himself?"

"Yes. Why shouldn't he? He's rich enough to keep up ten such. By the way, he is a member of Parliament now—do you know it? They've returned him for Wheatshire."

And thus the conversation continued. But we need not follow it.

After Captain Cust left at night, for he stayed the day with them, Lady Harriet sat in silent thought, apparently weighing some matter in her mind.

"Sandy," she said at length, looking across at him, "I don't think I shall tell Adela anything about this—I mean that her husband is to take the baronetcy. It will be better not."

"Why?" asked Sir Sandy.

"It will bring her past folly home to her so severely. It might bring all the fever back again."

"As you please of course, dear. But she did not seem to care at all when told he had inherited Netherleigh."

"That's all you know about it, Sandy!" retorted Lady Harriet. "I saw—all the light in her eyes and the flush in her cheeks. I tell you, sir, she is in love with her husband now, though she may never have been before, and it will try her too greatly, in her sick state. Her chief bone of contention in the old days was his name; that's removed now. And she has forfeited that lovely place, Court Netherleigh!"

"You know best, my dear. Perhaps it will be kinder not to tell her. But you will have to caution Davvy, and those about her: this is news that will not rest in a nutshell. But," remarked Sir Sandy after a pause, "with all deference to your superior judgment, Harriet, I do not think she can care much more for her husband now than she cared of yore."

"Listen, Sandy," was the whispered answer; "yesterday evening at dusk I went softly up to Adela's room, and peeped in to see whether she was dozing. She sat in the fire-light, her head bent over that little old photograph she has of Mr. Grubb. Suddenly she gave a yearning kind of cry, and began raining tears and kisses upon it."

CHAPTER XXX.

ADELA STARTLED.

IN a small "appartement" in the Champs Elysées, so small, indeed, that the whole of it could have almost been put into the big salon of the château in Switzerland, and in its little drawing-room, sat Lady Harriet MacIvor and M. le Docteur Féron. Lady Adela sat in it also; but she went for nobody now. It was a lovely April day; the sun shone in through the crimson draperies of the window, flowers were budding, the trees were already in their first fresh green.

M. le Docteur Féron and Lady Harriet were talking partly to, partly *at* Adela. Inert, listless, dispirited, she paid little or no attention to them, or to anything they might choose to say: life and its interests seemed to be no longer of moment to her.

When we saw her in January she was getting better from the low fever. But she did not get well. The fever did subside in a degree, but the weakness and the listlessness remained. Do what they would, Sir Sandy and his wife could not rouse her from her apathy. Sir Sandy tried reasoning and amusement; Lady Harriet alternately soothed and ridiculed; Davvy, even, ventured now and again on a good scold. It was all one.

That exposé the previous summer, when she was put away by her husband, seemed to have changed Adela's very nature. At first her mood was a resentful one; then it became repentant: that was succeeded by one of heart-sickening remorse. Remorse for her own line of conduct during the past years. With the low fever in Switzerland, she began to think of serious things. The awakening to the responsibilities that lie upon us all to remember and prepare for a future and better state—which awakening comes to us all sooner or later in a greater or a less degree—came to Lady Adela. She saw what her past life had been, all its mocking contempt for what was good, its supreme indifference, its intense selfishness. Night by night on her bended knees, amid sobs and bitter tears, she besought forgiveness of the Most High God. Her cheeks turned red with shame whenever she thought of her kind and good husband, and of how she had requited him. Lady Harriet was right, too, in her surmise—that Adela had now grown to *love* her husband. How full of contradictions is this human heart of ours, experience shows us more greatly day by day. When she could have indulged that love, she threw it contemptuously from her; now that the time had gone by for it, it was growing into something like idolatry.

Adela did not get better; perhaps, with this distressed frame of mind, much improvement was not to be looked for. At length the MacIvors grew alarmed, and resolved to take her to Paris for change and for better advice. Adela, contrary to expectation, made no

objection ; it seemed as though she no longer cared a straw where she went, or what became of her. "If we offered to box her up in a coffin and bury her in the ground for good and all, I don't believe she'd say no," tartly spoke Lady Harriet one day to the laird. To Paris they came, reaching it during March, and M. le Docteur Féron was at once called in, a man of great repute among the English. It was now April, and M. le Docteur, with all his skill, had done nothing.

"But truly there's no reason in it, miladi," he was saying this fine day, to Lady Harriet, in English, the language he generally chose to use with his patients, however perfectly they might speak his own. "Miladi Adela has nothing grave amiss with her ; absolutely nothing. To sit as she does has no reason in it. There is no sense common within it."

"As I tell her continually," rejoined Lady Harriet, smiling to herself at his quaint phrases.

"What illness she has rests on the nerves, see-you," proceeded the doctor. "A little on the mind. The earliest day I saw her I did ask whether she did have one great shock, or trouble : you remember of that, do you not, madame?"

"But—good gracious !—one ought not to give way perpetually to any shock, or trouble—even if one has had such a thing," remonstrated Lady Harriet.

"As I say. Can anything be more clear? Miladi has nothing to render her sick, and yet miladi sits there, all sick, day after day.—You hear, miladi?"—turning to Lady Adela.

"Oh, yes, I hear," she gently answered, lifting her wan but still lovely face for a moment, and then letting it droop again.

"And it is time to finish this state of things," resumed the doctor to Lady Harriet. "It must be finished, see you, madame."

"It ought to be," acquiesced Lady Harriet. "But if she does not end it herself, how are *we* to do it?"

"You go out yourself, madame, with monsieur, your husband, into a little society, cheerful : is it not so?" spoke the doctor, after a pause of consideration, during which he stroked his face with his gloved hand.

"Of course we do, M. Féron ; we are not hermits, and Paris is gay just now," quickly answered Lady Harriet. "We go to the Blunts' to-night."

"Then take her at once also ; take her with you. That may be tried. If it does not result, truly I shall not know what to propose. Drugs are hopeless in a case like this," added the doctor as he made two elaborate bows, one to each lady, and went out.

"Now, Adela, you *hear!*" began Lady Harriet, the moment the door closed, and her voice was sternly resolute. "We have tried everything, and now we shall try this. You go with us to Mrs. Blunt's to-night."

She did not refuse—wonderful to be able to say it. She folded her hands upon her chest and sighed in resignation: too worn out to combat longer; or, perhaps, too apathetical.

"What is it, Harriet? Not a dinner?"

"Oh dear no. An evening party: a crowd, I daresay. Music I think. And now I shall go and talk to Davvy about what you are to wear," concluded Lady Harriet, escaping from the room lest there should come a tardy opposition. But Adela never made it. It seemed to her that she was quite worn out with it all; with the antagonism and the preaching, and the doctors and Harriet; well-nigh wearied to death. Davvy dressed her plainly enough; a black net robe with black trimmings; and Lady Adela quietly submitted, saying neither yes nor no. "Just as if she had been asleep all the while," remarked Davvy afterwards; "as if her body had been here and her mind and senses somewhere else!"

"Don't let me be announced, Harriet," pleaded Adela, as they were going along. "Nobody cares to hear my name now. I can creep in behind you and Sir Sandy."

Mr. and Mrs. Blunt's house was small and their company large. Lady Harriet expected a crowd, and she met with it. Adela, unannounced according to her wish, shook hands with Mrs. Blunt, and escaped into a small recess at the end of the further reception-room. It was draped off by crimson-and-gold curtains, and she sat down, thankful to be alone. She turned giddy: the noise, the lights, the crowd unnerved her. It was so long now since she had mingled in anything of the kind.

She sat on there, and began thinking *when* the last time had been. It came into her memory with a rush. The last time she had made one in these large gatherings was at her own home in Grosvenor Square, not very many days before she finally left it. Ay, and the attendant circumstances also came back to her, even to the words which had passed between herself and her husband. In the bitter contempt she cherished for him, she had not chosen to inform him of the assembly she purposed having, but sent the cards out unknown to him. Not a syllable did she say, and he knew nothing about it until the night arrived and he came home to dinner.

"What is the awning up for?" he asked of Hilson, wondering a little.

"My lady has a large assembly to night, sir," was the answer.

"A large one?"

"Very, sir."

Mr. Grubb knitted his brow, and went on to his wife. It was not the fact of the assembly that vexed him; it was that she had not made it worth her while to inform him of it.

Davvy was putting the finishing touches to her hair. How well she remembered it now; every minute particular came back to her, bit by bit: where she sat in the room—not at the dressing-glass as

usual, but before the open window, for it was intensely hot. Her robe was a costly white lace adorned with pearls.

"What is this, Adela?" he had asked. "I hear you have a large assembly to-night."

"Well?" she retorted.

"Could you not have told me?"

"I did not see any especial necessity for telling you."

"I might have had an engagement. In fact, I have one. I ought to go to one of the hotels to-night to see a gentleman who has come over from India on business."

"You can go," was her scornful reply to this. "Your presence is not needed here; it is not at all necessary to the success of the evening."

"There is one, at any rate, who would not miss me; and that is yourself," had been his reply as he left her, to go to his room to dress for dinner. Yes, it all came back vividly to-night.

She bent her face in her hands as she recalled this, hiding it in very shame that she could have been so wicked. Lady Sarah Hope had once told her the devil had got possession of her. "Not only the devil," moaned Adela now, "but all his myrmidons."

Someone was beginning to sing; a lady. She had a sweet and powerful voice, and she chose a song that Mr. Grubb used to be particularly fond of—"Robin Adair."

Adela looked beyond the draperies at the moving crowd, gathering itself up for a momentary stillness, and disposed herself to listen. Her thoughts were full of Mr. Grubb, as the verses went on. Every word came home to her aching heart.

"But him I loved so well
Still in my heart doth dwell—
Oh, I shall ne'er forget

Robin Adair."

Applause ensued. It was much better deserved than that mostly accorded in these cases. A minute later, and some one called out "Hush, hush!" for the lady had consented to sing again. The noise subsided into silence; the singer was turning over the leaves of her music-book.

To this silence there arose an interruption. Mr. Blunt's English butler appeared, announcing a late guest:

"Sir Francis Netherleigh."

The man had a low, sonorous voice, and every syllable penetrated to Lady Adela's ear. The name struck on the chords of her memory. Sir Francis Netherleigh! Why, he had been dead many a year. Could another Sir Francis Netherleigh be in existence? What did it mean?—for it must be remembered that all such news had been and was still kept from her. Lady Adela gazed out from her obscure vantage-ground.

Not for a minute or two did she see anything: the company was dense. Then, threading his way through the line made for him, advanced a man of noble form and distinguished face, the form and face of him she had once called husband. A sound, as of terror, escaped her.

He was in evening dress, and in mourning. He seemed to be making direct for the recess, for Adela; and she shrank behind the draperies to hide herself.

For a moment all things seemed to be in a mist, inwardly and outwardly. What brought Mr. Grubb *there*—and who was the Sir Francis Netherleigh that had been announced, and where was he?

Not to Adela had he been advancing, neither did he see her. Mrs. Blunt chanced to be standing before the recess; it was to her he was making his way.

"How do you do, Sir Francis?" she warmly exclaimed, meeting his hand. "It is so good of you to come: my husband thought you would not be able to spare the time."

"I thought so also when I spoke to him this afternoon," was the answer given, in the earnest, pleasant tones Adela remembered so well. "My stay in Paris is but for a few hours this time. Where is Mr. Blunt?"

"I saw him close by a minute ago. Ah, there he is—John," called out Mrs. Blunt, "here is Sir Francis Netherleigh."

They both moved off towards the fire-place; the crowd closed behind them, hiding them from sight, and Adela breathed again. So then, *he* was Sir Francis Netherleigh! How had it all come about?

Gathering her shawl around her, she escaped from the recess and glided through the room with bent head. In the outer room, opening to the corridor and the staircase, she came upon her sister.

"Harriet, I must go," she feverishly uttered. "I can't stay here."

"Oh, indeed!" said Lady Harriet. "Well—I don't know."

"If there's no carriage waiting, I can have a cab; or I can walk. It will not hurt me. I shall find my way through the streets."

She ran down the stairs. Harriet felt obliged to follow her. "Will you call up Sir Sandy MacIvor's carriage," asked Lady Harriet of the servants standing below. "Adela, do wait an instant! One would think the house was on fire."

"I must go; I must get away," was the eager, terrified interruption, and Adela bore on to the outer door.

The carriage was called, and came up. In point of fact Sir Sandy and his wife had privately agreed to keep it waiting, in case Adela should turn faint in the unusual scene, and have to leave. In the porte cochère they encountered a lady who was but then arriving.

"What, going already!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," replied Lady Harriet; "and I wish you would just tell Sir

Sandy for me : you will be sure to see him somewhere in the rooms. Say my sister does not feel well and we have gone home."

The entering guest nodded. They passed out to the carriage, and were soon bowling along the streets. Adela drew into her corner, cowering and shivering.

"Did you see him?" she gasped.

"Oh, yes, I saw him," grumblingly responded Lady Harriet, who was not best pleased at having to quit the gay scene in this summary fashion. "I am sure Sandy will conclude we have been spirited away, unless Mrs. Seymour finds him. A fine flurry he'll be in."

"Harriet, what did it mean? They called him Sir Francis Netherleigh."

"He is Sir Francis Netherleigh."

"Since when? Why did you not tell me?"

"He has been Francis Netherleigh since Aunt Margery died : the name came to him with the property. He has been *Sir* Francis since—oh, for about six weeks now. Uncle Francis wished the baronetcy to be revived in him, and his wishes have been carried out."

Adela paused, apparently revolving the information. "Then his name is no longer Grubb?"

"In one sense, no. For all social uses that name has passed from him."

"Why did you never tell me of this?" repeated Adela.

"From the uncertainty as to whether you would care to hear it, Adela. We decided to say nothing until you were stronger."

A second pause of thought. "If he has succeeded to the name, why, so have I. Have I not? Though he puts me away from himself, Harriet, he cannot take from me his name."

"Of course you have succeeded to it."

Pause the third. "Then I ought to have been announced to-night as Lady Adela Netherleigh!"

"Had you been announced at all. You solved the difficulty, you know, by telling me you would not be announced—that you would creep in after me and Sandy."

"The difficulty! What difficulty?"

"Well, had you heard yourself called Netherleigh, you would have wanted to know, there and then, the why and the wherefore. It might have created a small commotion."

Pause the fourth. "Who is he in mourning for? Aunt Margery?"

"And also for his mother. Mrs. Lynn lived just long enough to see him take up the baronetcy. I think it must have gratified her—that her son should be the one to succeed at last. *She* would have had Court Netherleigh in the old days, Adela, had she not displeased Uncle Francis by her marriage, not Margery Upton. He told Margery so when he was dying."

"The world seems full of changes," sighed Adela.

"It always was, and always will be. But I fancy the right mostly comes uppermost in the end," added Lady Harriet. "Where is Mary Lynn, you ask? She lives with Sir Francis in Grosvenor Square; the house's mistress."

Adela ceased her questioning. Amid the many items for reflection suggested to her by the news, was this: that the once hated name of Grubb had been suppressed for ever. There flashed across her a reminiscence of a day in the past autumn, when she was last staying at Court Netherleigh. She had been giving some scorn to the name, after her usual custom, and Margery Upton had answered it with a most peculiar look. Adela did not understand the look then: she did now. That expressive look, had she been able to read it, might have told her that Mr. Grubb would not long retain the name. Adela shrank closer into the corner of the carriage and pressed her hands upon her burning eyes. The blindness that she had shown! The foolish, infatuated woman she had been!

"Did you notice how noble he looked to-night?" she softly said, after awhile.

"He always did look noble, Adela. Here we are."

The carriage drew up to the door. As Lady Harriet, after getting out herself, turned to give her hand to Adela, weak enough still to require especial care, she did not find it responded to.

"Are you asleep, child? Come. We are at home."

"I beg your pardon, Harriet," was the meek answer.

She had only been waiting to stem the torrent of tears flowing forth. Lady Harriet saw them glistening on her wasted cheeks by the light of the carriage lamps. Bitter tears, telling of a breaking heart.

"Sandy," observed Lady Harriet to her husband that night, "I do not see that a further stay here will be of benefit to Adela. We may as well be making preparations for our journey to the Highlands."

"Just as you please," acquiesced Sir Sandy. "I, you know, would rather be in the Highlands than anywhere else. Fix your own time."

"Then we will start next week," decided Lady Harriet.

(To be continued.)



AMONG THE HUNGARIANS.

IT was during the Carnival at Vienna that I first made the acquaintance of the Countess Zitvay and her two charming daughters. They had come up from Hungary for the balls and other amusements of the season, and we met frequently at the house of a mutual friend.

The Viennese aristocracy have, at times, the disagreeable peculiarity of considering themselves very much better than their neighbours, especially should those neighbours have had the misfortune to be born on the eastern side of the Danube; and my preconceived notions of Hungarian talent and character were so frequently met in Vienna with cold shrugs of the shoulder, that I grew impatient to see and judge for myself. Hence I became a frequent visitor at the house of the Countess W——, where not only the Zitvays were often to be seen, but quite a little Hungarian colony was wont to assemble.

Eager-eyed, impatient politicians dilated on the wrongs and abuses of the Government, pulling their heavy moustaches and gesticulating fiercely. Hunting, shooting, and horse-racing were discussed by the younger men as though they were the only interests in life; beautiful Transylvanians, with complexions like white roses, long, heavy-lidded, dark-blue eyes, and a truly Oriental indolence, sat, half-reclining, among cushions, in deep contemplation of their exquisite hands and finger-nails. And every now and then one of the party would be drawn to the piano, literally to astonish the weak nerves of at least one member of the community by their rare talent for music, which seems innate in the Hungarian race—a talent known to Europe through the wonderful playing of Liszt, and existing, unknown except in their own immediate circle, in hundreds of the Magyars.

I had been seated, one evening, for some time, in a very comfortable corner of Countess W——'s drawing-room, near the Countess Zitvay, whose still lovely face and charm of conversation had always a magnetic attraction for me, when our hostess drew near, with a remark upon the music to which we had just been listening.

I observed that I had been very much puzzled by it. The sudden changes from fast to slow, from melancholy, long drawn-out chords to a gay air, played at headlong speed and in most extraordinary time, had completely bewildered me. Besides which, so many other instruments had appeared somehow to have got into the piano, and to be playing variations on their own account, that I lost all notion of the tune, if there were any.

"Oh, you cold-blooded Englishman!" exclaimed the Countess

W——. "Why, it was the Csardas—our national dance! Did you not see how half the assembly, even the oldest and gravest men, and the laziest Transylvanian girls, could not keep their feet from moving in time? And you sit philosophically still and criticise, while each note of that inspiring air sets everyone else's blood dancing in their veins."

"I humbly apologise for being an Englishman," I replied; "but, you see, my preferences were not consulted as to my nationality. I never heard a Csardas played before, and certainly never saw it danced; so, perhaps, my philosophical composure may be excused on those grounds."

"Be merciful to him, Wanda," said the Countess Zitvay. "It is really almost impossible to render real Hungarian music upon a piano. To appreciate it properly, one should hear it played by the gipsies on their own instruments in the open air. It is far too proper and methodical upon the piano." And then, turning to me: "You must hear it when the peasants dance the Csardas to it, when every man among them goes wild over it—when they laugh, cry, stamp and shout, just as the music commands. You ought to see a vintage."

"That indeed must be a pleasure," I replied, "and it would be something entirely new to me."

"Then come and see it with us. I have heard that you are going to Transylvania this summer, and, in returning, you must pay us a visit. My husband will be delighted to welcome an Englishman. If you could time it towards the end of September, we would show you a real vintage, and teach you to dance the Csardas yourself to the music of the gipsies."

I thanked her heartily for the invitation, which I accepted with pleasure, humbly suggesting, however, as regarded my Csardas dancing, that my limbs not being composed of gutta-percha, and strung together on electric wire, as I had heard was usually the case among the Hungarians, it might, perhaps, be more advisable for me not to make an exhibition of myself in that way.

A pleasant little note of invitation reminded me of my promise during the summer; and thus it happened that, in the end of the following September, I found myself on the railway between Transylvania and Pesth: the thermometer between eighty and ninety degrees in the shade, and the train crawling along at what seemed about the rate of five miles an hour.

The picture before me was not inviting. As far as eye could see, stretched an immense plain, unbroken by even a hillock, and burning beneath a fiery sun. Over the yellow fields of Indian corn, and the acres of pale stubble ground, gleaming almost white in the quivering heat of the air, was arched the great vault of blue without a single cloud. Here and there one might trace the windings of broad white roads, over which hovered fine dust like a morning fog.

But now the train modified its already less than moderate speed; a line of low whitewashed houses came in sight, and I discovered that I was arriving at my destination.

A change from the stifling air of the railway carriage to what resembled the steadfast, burning heat of an oven, and presently I was astonished to see—emerging from a group of Wallachians in long sheepskin cloaks—the incongruous figure of a footman in English livery.

The man came up to me, and touching his hat, announced that he was sent by Count Zitvay, and that the carriage was waiting. This announcement, however, did not agree with his costume, for it was made, not in English, but in German, and with a strong Hungarian accent, that by this time I had learned to recognize.

He made way for me among the groups of lounging and squatting peasants, and in a few moments we were raising suffocating clouds of dust on the road to the village.

This road, being the chief thoroughfare of the village, was nearly a quarter of a mile wide, so that there was room on both sides of the carriage track, as it went meandering and zig-zaging along, for broad ditches, either dried and cracking into huge fissures in the sun, or still containing filthy stagnant water, on which a few sleepy ducks and geese tried to gratify their aquatic tendencies.

At last we jolted and rattled into the village. On either side the principal street (the ditches serving as a kind of ornamental front garden) were rows of thatched cottages or huts, standing sideways towards the road, each having a yard or court separating it from its neighbour and shut off from the general public by a great wooden gate, under which fierce-looking curs squeezed sometimes their heads, and sometimes their whole bodies, while joining in a general chorus of indignation at my arrival.

The houses are all built in the same style—long, low, straight, and whitewashed, and are constructed out of the mud which forms the principal feature of the surrounding country.

If one of the inhabitants wishes to be accommodated with a family residence, he makes arrangements for digging a considerable hole somewhere in the neighbourhood, and with the material thus acquired erects himself a desirable tenement with one door, and two very small windows, warranted not to open. Here he installs himself and family, and perhaps a few friends, and, if he is well off, a few pigs and geese.

In the course of time it is very probable that the holes dug by these enterprising Hungarians with a view to the erection of family mansions, may fill with water—as they generally do, considering that the land around is rather of a swampy nature; but that does not disquiet them. So much the better for the ducks and geese—what would those interesting birds do without water? This water, having no outlet, becomes slightly disagreeable after a time; then more so,

then very much more so ; until at last the combined odours of that and the ditches—always before the houses—render the evening breezes and soft summer airs of so extremely peculiar a character that the adventurous stranger penetrating into these regions for the first time in the hot season is filled with wonder and admiration at the strength of the olfactory nerves of the natives.

These circumstances might, perhaps, be considered to have some slight influence on the sanitary returns of the community : and rash people have gone so far as to say that it is partly owing to this state of things that every third person is down with the fever at intervals during the whole year. But the natives scorn such insinuations ; they like good strong air, say they ; none of your insipid, scentless breezes. So they sit before their ditches, feel the odour tickle their brains and nostrils like snuff, and enjoy themselves.

All these things I learnt later ; for now, while driving by, with the sun pouring its rays upon my head, baking and blistering the skin upon my nose, my powers of observation were none of the keenest.

Before most of these buildings were wooden forms or stools, on which women and children lounged ; and where there were none, they crouched upon the earth and stared at the passers-by.

The costume of the inhabitants, who were Hungarians mixed with a Wallachian colony, was of the very simplest description—the children either in a state of nature or clothed only in a coarse white shirt. The women add to this a petticoat, and frequently a kerchief tied under the chin ; and the men appeared to have on, besides the shirt, which barely reached to the waist, a sort of white petticoat, so loose, fringed, and flowing were their pantaloons. These men wore also, in many cases, a waistcoat, or sleeveless jacket, with rows of buttons like pewter marbles, and their national headgear had a strong resemblance to a Turkish fez.

After about twenty minutes' jolting we turned a corner, and at last something came in sight which, though dusty and dry, still bore the semblance of vegetation. A long, walled hedge appeared, over which green bushes were growing, and groups of graceful acacia trees. Then came the carriage gate, and leaving the glaring, suffocating, high-road, we drove through welcome shade and greenness up to the house.

My reception was so thoroughly kind and hospitable as to make me feel at once at home. After the hours I had already spent that day in an atmosphere like that of an oven, and in weary contemplation of miles of flat, monotonous, sunburnt country, I felt as though I had been suddenly translated to Paradise.

The house was very large—built almost in the shape of a T, with stone corridors running along on one side. All the rooms being on the ground floor, and the walls immensely thick, the great heat and staring light were deliciously tempered. After a refreshing bath, I was guided by a polite, well-trained footman along the stone passages,

and through pretty, modern-furnished rooms to the drawing-room, where the family were assembled, awaiting the summons to dinner.

The contrast between the faces and figures I had seen in passing through the village, and those now before me, struck me forcibly. Putting out of consideration the effect of costume—consisting, on the one hand, of coarse garments of truly primitive simplicity, and on the other of flowing silks and muslins, and the latest fashions from Paris—the Zitvay family seemed to be of an entirely different type, although, as my hostess assured me during dinner, of the purest Hungarian blood. In fact, she seemed quite offended when I ventured to suggest that there might have been a slight Teutonic admixture somewhere. But the little urchins whom I had seen chasing the ducks, and the men and women who were taking their siesta in the open air, were rather below than above the middle height, and their piercing black eyes, aquiline noses, and dark complexions, had not the smallest resemblance to the soft blue eyes, with long curling lashes, and fair hair of the handsome family around me. And yet those black villagers were of the true Hungarian type, descendants of the ancient Huns, and the Wallachians among them were in many cases fairer.

Count Zitvay was at least twenty years older than his wife—a tall, fine, stately old gentleman, with singularly pleasant, courteous manners, and the bearing of a “grand seigneur,” as indeed he was, being one of the richest men and largest landowners in the country, as well as of very ancient family.

The dinner, not being particularly in accordance with English notions of cookery, seemed to me to last for an interminable space of time, though served in the most correct European fashion; the only thing that rather shocked my notions of propriety being the occasional seizing of a bone with the fingers, the free use of a toothpick during the meal, and, at its close, the rinsing of the mouth into the finger-glasses. Dinner being over, we all adjourned with the ladies to the smoking-room, where, after shaking and kissing of hands, and reciprocal wishes for a good digestion, according to the time-honoured custom in these parts, the Countess presented each of the gentlemen with a little cup of black coffee and a tiny glass of liqueur. Cigars and Turkish pipes were produced, and we all proceeded to blow clouds which would have sent an English hostess into convulsions, but which had not the smallest effect on the amiable little lady of the house.

She and her daughters then plied me with questions as to my experiences in their land, and flattered themselves that they would show me something new on the morrow. All preparations having been completed, servants and household stuff having been sent in advance, and musicians secured, the vintage in the mountains, where Count Zitvay held large vineyards, was to begin the next day, and the hour for our departure was already fixed. We should have to leave early,

for we had some hours' journey to the mountains. Countess Erzsi (the eldest daughter), as she said this, looked as delighted as her little brothers and sisters, whose faces literally beamed with satisfaction.

"Only," said she, "don't be very difficult to please with your dinner, for I shall be cook."

"You?" said I, looking at the graceful little figure in trailing robes, and the tiny white hands.

"Yes," she replied; "because, you see, we can't take the cook, or else what would papa do? He stays at home."

"I should rather think he did," said her father, knocking the ashes out of his long pipe. "Take my advice, Mr. Owen, and stay at home with me. They will poison you with bad food and sour wine, deafen you with their execrable gipsy music, and then, when you are ill and miserable, and want nothing so much as rest, they will insist on your dancing till one in the morning, and afterwards give you such a bad bed that you are obliged to get out of it, and lie on the floor to get any sleep."

"Oh, papa! papa!" was the general chorus.

"Quite true," continued the Count; "and if that were only all! But they will drag you up and down the mountains all day long, and make you drive over horrible roads behind wretched, half-blind horses, lame on three legs, and fearful roarers."

"If papa would only come just once," said Erzsi, "especially this time."

"No, no!" returned her father. "I don't want to incapacitate myself for your wedding, my dear, and I prefer to stay at home."

"It is news to you, Mr. Owen, that our Erzsi is going to be married," said the Countess. And then she told me that the engagement was by this time some months old, and the wedding would take place next week at Pesth.

After congratulations, blushes, and information as to the bridegroom, the ladies left us with the promise of a summons to croquet in an hour; and the Count, his eldest son (a lad of seventeen), and I, were left to a long discussion on the merits of the different horses entered for the ensuing races at Pesth—their sires, dams, trainers, and jockeys; and then we went off to look at the stud.

II.

THE sun was but just rising next morning, and the bells of the little Wallachian church in the village were pealing out as we began to assemble in the court and on the vine-covered terrace behind the house. The air was delicious, clear, and cool; a heavy dew, the first for many weeks, had fallen during the night, a fresh breeze had sprung up, and light, fleecy clouds were scudding across the sky.

Careering round and round the great grass-plot of the yard was a

little, strongly-built carriage, with two dapper little ponies, driven by their master and owner, Gyula, a little fellow of ten; and he drove remarkably well, too, held the reins lightly and firmly, and sat like a rock upon his high coachman's cushion, with his diminutive groom, no bigger than himself, beside him.

One by one the party came together, laden with wraps and umbrellas; the ladies in practical short dresses and thick boots, well adapted for mountain wear; their faces freshened by the morning air, and their eyes bright with the anticipation of some days of real rustic life and hearty fun, unrestrained by the rules of etiquette or the criticisms of fashionable friends.

We were a large and far from peaceful community, and it took some time to arrange us in the various vehicles. At last I found myself seated on a high mail phaeton, beside Dénés, the eldest son, and behind a pair of horses which fully deserved the eulogiums he had bestowed on them the night before.

Through the winding roads of the park, out at the gates, and then we were in the fields. The larks sang as they quivered above our heads in the clear light, as if the sunshine had found a voice; the acacias rustled in the soft breeze; and the cows tinkled the bells about their necks as they slowly raised their heads to look meditatively after us. As we scampered by we roused the wild duck among the bulrushes of the marsh, and scared scores of hares and wild birds from our path.

The roads certainly had not improved since the previous day, but the heat was less; and when at last we stopped at the village where fresh horses had been ordered, and where we were to rest during the greatest heat, and attack the provisions with which we were provided, my spirits had gained the elasticity which pervaded those of the whole party. We laughed, chatted, and cracked jokes with the careless ease and utter abandonment of oneself to the humour of the moment which characterises the Hungarian race, and causes it so strongly to resemble the French.

And so by and by we set off again, the roads becoming better and better as the blue outline of mountains in the distance became more distinct. On all the great plain through which we had passed, it would have been as difficult to find a fragment of stone upon the way as a diamond; but now the horses' feet rang hard upon the ground, and the clouds of dust which had so long accompanied us were left in the rear. The ground began to rise a little; far off on one side wound a silver thread that my companions declared to be the river Maros, and on the left rose the rugged outlines of a chain of hills whose sides were covered with vineyards, intermixed with groups of foliage and straggling villages, with here and there a tiny church. From the summits frowned the ruins of more than one ancient castle, famed in the long wars of Hungary with the powerful enemies who surrounded her.

Suddenly the horses shied, and half swerved from the road. Looking quickly to the left, we discovered the cause of their alarm in the person of a brown-skinned gipsy boy, tastefully arrayed in a sort of yellow tablecloth of small size and brilliant pattern, which he had tied round his neck, and suffered to hang down his back like the blanket of a red Indian. Other costume he had none, and his brothers and sisters, who followed him through an opening in the hedge, whence their miserable encampment was visible, seemed to consider even this species of garment superfluous. With confused cries and shouts they dashed after the carriages, holding out their bronzed and dirty hands for money, shaking back their tangled black hair, and whining, persuading, entreating and abusing, followed us without the slightest effort for at least a mile, dodging the whips, the wheels, and the horses' hoofs, and yet crowding round us like a swarm of flies. At last a shower of kreutzers freed us from their importunity.

And now we came nearer to our destination. The clouds in the west were growing brighter, and a rosy, golden haze lay over the hills, with deep dark shadows marking here and there the course of a mountain-stream among the rocks. The setting sun was glinting on the windows of the village, lighting up the heavy masses of the chestnut-trees, and pouring broad floods of yellow rays upon the vineyards that clothed the hills. Far off we could hear the sound of music; and coming nearer and nearer, winding down the steep paths, were the figures of the peasants bearing great baskets of ripe grapes upon their heads.

All at once, the carriage which had taken the lead for some time disappeared in a gateway between thick chestnut trees upon the right, a sudden burst of music filled the air, and a confused sound of many voices. We followed, and, entering a court, found ourselves between a vineyard on one side, and the whitewashed, vine-trellised arches of a little terrace which ran along the front of a small, one-storied house, on the other. On the steps, and crowding the arched openings, and peeping between the leaves, were numbers of active, constantly-moving figures; some alighting, others welcoming guests already arrived from the country round; servants hurrying to and fro with bags, shawls and packages; a row of black-bearded gipsies with violins, cymbals, and I know not what, in their hands, producing sounds that seemed to have electricity in them, so that I was not surprised to see Erzsi's light little figure, already enveloped in an enormous cooking apron, suddenly commence to keep time to the music. Then as suddenly she darted off, after making 'the announcement:

"Supper in half an hour, ladies and gentlemen. Not to be kept waiting."

"Only give us enough, Erzsi; that is all we ask," was shouted in reply. And then began confusion ten times confounded.

Everyone seized the wrong person's baggage, and tried to make off with it; the hostess welcomed the guests already arrived, and introduced us all by our wrong names; the children rushed into the vine-press, and had to be brought back; everybody spoke at the same time. And above all the noise, hurry, and confusion, were heard the wildly exciting strains of the gipsy band.

At last, after frantically rushing out of a ladies' bedroom, where I found myself in consequence of thoughtlessly following my hostess, and being subsequently rescued from the kitchen by little Gyula, who constituted himself my protector, I found myself in the sleeping-room designed for my use. It was, perhaps, rather smaller than bedrooms usually are, being exactly large enough to hold a sofa-bed and a washstand; but I had long ago been warned to expect no comfort at all during the vintage, as the house was several sizes too small for all who proposed to inhabit it. Thus I was agreeably surprised to find that I was to have a room to myself, though hardly larger than a good-sized packing-case.

The chief apartment of the house, occupying the centre of it, and being entered immediately from the front steps, was that devoted to the wine-press. It was like a huge barn, the floor of trodden and beaten earth, and the door large and wide, to facilitate the entrance of immense baskets of grapes, and to give ingress to the only light which the place afforded. Here, when the eye grew accustomed to the gloom, I discovered dark forms moving to and fro.

On two sides were large vessels, something like enormous barrels, or small wooden pulpits, and in each of these a man appeared to be dancing. Around him were others, who, from time to time, flung the grapes beneath the dancer's feet, or arranged mysterious taps and screws, which were to aid the flowing of the grape-juice into the great vats in the cellar below. I looked into the barrels, and saw that the dancers, or treaders, were stamping on the skins and stems of the grapes, piled at least a foot in thickness, and drained of their juice by the process, the fruit having been thrown in promiscuously as it was picked—only that, in one case, the grapes were white, and in the other purple.

The overseer, a sturdy Wallachian, with a fierce black moustache and ringlets, looked narrowly at the little streams of juice that ran from the taps, and when, at last, those from one barrel dwindled, and then came drop by drop and stopped, the treader swung himself to the ground, and, with shovels and wooden vessels, proceeded to empty it of the pressed grape-skins and stalks, and re-fill it with fresh fruit.

And here I must say my romantic delusions as to the "treading of the wine-press," and all the patriarchal institutions which surround it, vanished at once and for ever. I had had dim ideas of snowy garments dyed purple with the juice of the grape, and the delicate feet of girls treading the luscious fruit under the

shade of vine-clad trellises in the open air. In my imagination there were fountains of pure water washing away all stains and impurities, and long processions of men and maidens bearing the fruit on their heads, all decked with flowers, and singing and dancing to the sound of harps and flutes.

Had I not seen pictures to that effect, read poetical descriptions of it, and had not I always been encouraged by my childhood's instructors in this delusion? And now, behold, there were not any snowy garments at all: the Hungarians had on coarse shirts, and loose drawers tucked up above the knee; and I came to the conclusion that they had never seen any fountains of pure water, and wouldn't have known the use of them if they had. For there was a kind of griminess about them, burnt in by the sun, which seemed to indicate that they never washed either themselves or their clothes. In fact, they had a fine contempt for the ordinary rules of cleanliness. One black-eyed, purple-legged fellow, with the grape-juice just drying on his bare feet, seized a basket, and ran off down the steps and into the vineyard, and presently returning with a load of the fruit, shot it into the press, and, with all the dust and dirt of the road still clinging to his feet, mounted, and began to tread the grapes, and soon stood almost knee-deep in the liquor, which, having served him as a sort of foot-bath, was to be the drink, perhaps, of future generations of refined, fastidious palates. Having seen this I became melancholy, and preferred to leave the rest of the manipulations of earth's choicest nectar in obscurity.

The other apartments of the house were built around the wine-press. There was but one of tolerable size—that which was to serve as dining, drawing, and dancing-room. The rest were more like cells in a honeycomb: tiny bedrooms, and a kitchen; all, of course, upon the ground floor.

Presently, out darted the sprite in the big apron, with a copper saucepan in one hand and a large metal spoon in the other. She took her station upon the terrace, motioned the gipsy band to silence, and proceeded to sound the dinner-gong upon these instruments. All the doors of the honeycomb cells opened at once, and the inmates exhibited the most laudable devotion to punctuality by marching straight to the dining-room—decorated with green in our honour—and seating themselves in grave expectation. The cook herself (without her apron) soon appeared, a rather anxious expression upon her pretty face, which, however, gradually gave place to a beaming satisfaction, as she saw the appreciation of her skill, and the prompt vanishing of the various dishes of her fabrication. We drank to the health of the cook with enthusiasm.

During the repast the gipsies upon the terrace had not ceased playing. The door was half open, and we could see the men distinctly from where we sat. There were at least eight or nine of them, nearly all handsome men; dark complexioned, with regular

features, and perfect sets of gleaming white teeth. They looked quiet and civilised enough, and were dressed in the ordinary European costume, but nothing could ever convert their fierce, restless, gipsy eyes into the commonplace optics of ordinary musicians.

One man especially excited my attention, as being the leader. He played the first violin, and stood while the others sat. He was sometimes swaying to and fro with the melody which he played; drawing long, plaintive, sobbing sounds from his instrument, with his head on one side, and his eyes fixed in a sort of passionate melancholy upon some distant point. Then suddenly turning towards the band, one sweep of the fiddle-bow would change the entire strain into a joyous expression of rollicking delight. The measure became quicker and quicker, a smile would gradually dawn over the leader's face, and his eyes, black and watchful, would glance from one to another of his listeners; from the faces to the dishes on the table (tempting enough in all probability to a hungry gipsy), thence round the room, taking quick note of every article therein, and resting at last in a sort of respectful and hopeless admiration upon the prettiest girl.

But my hostess soon gave me a striking proof of their wonderful native talent. Going up to the leader of the band, she asked him to play a piece of music which had recently been composed. He said he did not know it, and indeed it was quite new, and no one had the notes.

That did not matter, the hostess just hummed over the air to him, and he began to play it on his violin. After hearing it twice he nodded, quite satisfied, and turned to his band. He played it through once, and the band, all watching his every movement—the jerk of his elbow, and the stamp of his foot—followed suit; first and second violins, violoncellos and cymbals, and the cymbalom, without a single jarring tone, joined in the concert, and in ten minutes the whole air, in perfect time and expression, was harmonized for the entire band.

I remarked what musicians they would make if trained.

"Yes," said the Countess, "but that is just the impossibility. They like their wild life, travelling about hither and thither; and with their wonderful talent they get their living with little difficulty, especially as they are dreadful thieves. But when one begins to teach them to play more from notes they rebel. They are lazy, deceitful, make excuses, and finally run away."

"Carrying with them, I suppose, any little trifles they can lay their hands on as remembrances?"

"Indeed, yes; they have a decided weakness for souvenirs, especially valuable ones, and for that reason, one never leaves them in a room alone. They do best in the open air."

III.

SUPPER being over, we went out upon the terrace, on which by this time the moon was shedding her silver light, glistening on the vine leaves, and casting sharp black shadows on the whitewashed walls.

Most of the guests dispersed themselves to continue their dessert in the vineyard, but I remained beside the gipsies, attracted by the curious shape of one of the instruments on which they played.

One of the men was seated before an empty barrel, in lieu, I supposed, of a table—and on it he had placed a flat wooden instrument, something like a shallow box, almost a yard in width, but rather less in length.

I supposed it to be a stringed instrument, until, coming nearer, I discovered that what I had taken for strings were long flat strips of glass, arranged in different lengths. In each hand he held little sticks, made something like the hammers in the interior of a piano, and with these he struck the glass keys. Yet to say he struck the keys gives an imperfect impression, for the hammers only trembled and quivered and danced in his fingers like the drops of a fountain falling into the basin below. One note was never long drawn out, but vibrated in never-ending repetition, particularly when the air played was slow and melancholy. This instrument is the cymbalom; and in every Hungarian melody there are notes which are only producible in perfection on just this instrument, although first-rate performers can execute a feeble imitation of its trembling tones upon the piano.

And now the dancing-room began to fill, the gipsies were installed in a corner, and polkas, waltzes and quadrilles began; but only to inspire the players and dancers with enthusiasm enough for the real business of the evening—the Csardas.

It must have been nearly nine o'clock, a late hour for so rural a spot, when the gipsies, after a silence of some minutes, began playing a slow, melancholy air, which I instantly recognised—from the peculiar rhythm—to be Hungarian. Pair by pair the dancers approached the band, until a dense ring was formed close to the music.

For a Csardas only two people are necessary, although, as in a waltz, it may be danced by hundreds. The gentleman holds the lady's waist by placing a hand on either side, while her hands rest on his shoulders, so that they front each other, and I am told that the rules of the dance compel them to look each other in the face. They began moving to and fro in slow time to a wild and melancholy air, the peculiarity of the movement being that the dancers every now and then interrupted their minuet by a sudden milkmaid's curtsy, for I can give no other name to the curious little bob they performed after every two steps.

This slow, quiet movement very much astonished me. I had

always heard the Csardas spoken of as something almost savage in its wildness, and these people might have been on their way to a funeral for aught of animation they evinced.

The instruments of the gipsies all seemed to be bewailing their fate in chorus; the cymbalom trembled with emotion, the face of the leader of the band was so long that I thought he was meditating an unusually appalling suicide.

But before I knew it, the music had changed and the fun grew fast and furious. The previous step, or something very like it, was continued, only sixteen times as fast, so that the dancers did nothing but bob up and down like corks on a stormy sea. They still held each other, and never moved from the place where they had taken their stand, for a Csardas must be danced on as small a space of ground as possible.

Now I understood that one must be a born Hungarian to dance the Csardas; for I caught sight of Erzsi, and by a slight movement was able to watch her evolutions; and I came to the conclusion that an Englishwoman of her rank would as soon think of dancing the Csardas, as it ought to be danced, as of dancing a ballet.

Her partner held her little waist on either side, and every now and then twisted or rolled her to and fro between his hands, and then changed or threw her from one arm to the other, her hands being meanwhile upon his shoulders, and she looking straight into his eyes with a pair of the loveliest orbs that ever bewildered a man's senses.

They had already been dancing at least for half an hour, and the bobbing up and down had lapsed into a kind of continual tremulous movement, but the excitement seemed to increase. Erzsi's partner held her with one hand, and waved his hand above his head with a shout, caught her in both hands, and whirled her wildly round and round, let her go, and putting his two hands to his head (with the gesture, as I thought, of a man going mad), executed a wonderful double shuffle with his feet, and then began to whirl round and round like a dervish, she doing the same, till with one accord they stopped, and seemed to fling themselves into each other's arms again.

Imagine these manoeuvres executed continually by a dozen couples, all dancing so close to each other that they frequently touched, and, above all, so close to the gipsies that a stumble or a fall would have smashed in the cymbalom, or utterly exterminated the double bass. Imagine the fearful noise of eight or nine instruments in one comparatively small room; and, added to that, the stamping and shuffling of feet, the occasional shout of the dancers, and a lively conversation going on among the spectators—and then imagine the heat. The thinnest members of the community looked as if they had spent a month in a vapour bath; but the more robust appeared as though a watering cart had just gone over them, so damp and limp were they; even their very moustachios hung down at the corners, and gave them a ludicrously forlorn appearance.

I thought, when they got to this pitch, they must leave off or die. But no! They only shouted "*Lassau!*" (slowly), and then the slow movement began again, and men and maidens wiped their heated brows, indulged in a little gossip and a good deal of coquetting for five minutes, while that suicidal misery of a music was making me regret that ever I was born. Then the music changed, and they all went mad again. This continued for two mortal hours, and then we went to bed.

It was getting rather too warm for absolute comfort as our procession wound up the hills, the next morning, to the vineyards of Count Zitvay, which lay at a tolerable elevation. We had left our indefatigable gipsies behind us; but every now and then, as we stopped to rest under the grateful shade of the chestnuts, we heard the sounds of music above among the vines. When we at last reached the grape gatherers, the sound was explained, for there also were musicians, playing to animate the workers.

Here, at least, my romantic delusions were not dispelled. Black-eyed, laughing urchins ran up and down the slopes, barefooted, carrying wooden vessels filled with the fruit; the girls sang to the music as they plucked the grapes, and the gipsies seemed to enjoy themselves to their hearts' content. The vine-dressers and villagers in this part are almost exclusively Wallachians, speaking a dialect strongly resembling Italian; so much so, indeed, that I could almost manage to hold a conversation with a Wallachian, while unable to understand two words of Hungarian, which seems to have no likeness to any other language under the sun.

The Wallachians, unlike the Hungarians, do not permit their wives to work in the fields; and hence the far greater comfort visible in this part, in the houses, and in the costume of the women. They are a fine race, and as a natural consequence of their being less exposed to the weather, do not lose their beauty so soon as their Hungarian neighbours. Their costume is also most picturesque. On their black hair they wear a gaily coloured handkerchief, and over a white embroidered under garment with loose sleeves, they wear a bright shawl or kerchief, with rows of coins hung round the neck, representing, I believe, the dowry of the girls. Their bright-coloured skirts stand out all round, as though they wore a crinoline, and in many cases the embroidery of an under petticoat is allowed to be visible, over high scarlet leather boots, reaching to the knee. A Wallachian girl, with jet-black hair, regular, almost classical features, and splendid dark eyes, carrying a basket of grapes upon her head, is by no means an unpleasant spectacle.

After watching the grape gatherers for some time, we strolled slowly down the hill, laden with the spoils of the vine, which each one had gathered for his own special delectation. The carriages were waiting for us below, and after an hour's drive we found ourselves again on foot, mounting broad flights of broken and rocky

steps, under the beautiful avenue of trees which shaded the ascent to the church of Radua.

We were just about to enter the church, when a sound of distant voices joined in song struck upon our ear, and drawing back we saw flags waving in the air, and a long procession of pilgrims appearing and disappearing among the trees. We watched them entering the wonder-working church, slowly and solemnly, with uncovered heads; their song dying away as the rich notes of the organ pealed out: and then we followed.

The church was large, and of stone, and, for a wonder in Hungary, neither dirty, nor crowded with tinsel ornament; but the high mass lasted so long that I stole out and seated myself beneath the chestnut trees, watching their flickering light and shade upon the stones, and listening to the organ.

Within the last few months I had seen much of the Hungarians, had mingled with every class, and taken part in many occupations and amusements; and the wish I had cherished to know and understand the character of the nation had been to a certain extent satisfied.

But it was rather a melancholy satisfaction. I recognised the fiery, untameable spirit that I had expected; the patriotism, the kindly hospitality and grace of manner; and, added to this, talents which, if cultivated, would scarcely find their equal. Only a Russian can excel a Hungarian as a linguist, and the latter speaks every language with a charm and purity of accent which never ceased to astonish me.

There are draughtsmen and painters who, if born poor, might equal their famous compatriot Munkacsy; and to find a second Liszt might be far from difficult; but the indolence, the terrible laziness, the caprice and subjection of everything to the humour of the moment seem unconquerable. Methodical, earnest hard work, that *sine qua non* of success, seems almost impossible to them. But they comfort themselves when their nation is compared with others, by the reflection that it is young in comparison with those of the great countries, which had already a state and government before the Huns had settled in these parts. Whether the individual finds much consolation in the national imperfection is a question which it is difficult to answer.

Such were my reflections as I sat near the old church awaiting the return of my friends; reflections which did not preclude a feeling of lively gratitude for the generous and kindly hospitality and friendship which had been so frankly offered me.

Our visit to the castle was but short, for the hours of daylight were waning. After another day or two, passed very much in the manner I have described, we all took leave of the vintagers; and I, with earnest wishes for a future meeting, bade adieu to my kind hosts, and set my face towards the West.

HOW KENRICK MARRIED JULIET EUSTIS.

A STORY OF AMERICAN LIFE.

BY FRANCES E. WADLEIGH.

ONE of the scholars had been very inattentive and somewhat insubordinate; the unusual heat had, perhaps, soured her temper; so the weary governess had been compelled to detain her in the schoolroom during the short afternoon recess, and thereby punished herself more than she did the sullen girl.

The warm May sun streamed in at the long uncurtained windows, and brought into full relief the dusty floor and highly-varnished desks, the grimy blackboard at which a score of girls had recently been busy with chalk and string, the more or less shabby books carelessly thrust into their racks, and the "fagged" look on the young teacher's face.

"How tired you look, dear Miriam!" exclaimed Rhoda Crosby, a governess in the same school, as she languidly entered the room. "What a shame to have kept one of the girls in! I came to ask you to take a little walk with me, just round the block; we have plenty of time."

"Not to-day, thank you," returned Miriam, "though I should like some fresh air. Oh, Rhoda! don't you wish that we could go to the sea this vacation?" she added, earnestly.

Both Miriam and Rhoda had spent their childhood in a pretty little town on the Atlantic coast, not far from Boston, and after graduating at one of the Massachusetts normal schools, according to the American custom, had journeyed together to the inland town where they were now teaching.

Their salaries were not large, as both were young and inexperienced, and would not permit any long or expensive trips during the mid-summer vacation; so the two summers that they had been in Plainford they had contented themselves with three or four weeks in a farmhouse, where the highest attainable hill had an elevation of scarcely eight hundred feet.

"The sea! O—h, to hear the waves come thundering in after a storm! to see them break gently in a calm day! to drink in the pure air, that hasn't seen land since it left Ireland!" answered Rhoda.

"Ireland! Would not the south of France answer your purpose better?" laughed her companion.

"You are too literal!" rejoined Rhoda; adding, in a lower tone: "Do you never try to forget how much you, as a teacher, are supposed to know? Wouldn't it be a relief not to feel compelled to be always strictly accurate?"

How Kenrick Married Juliet Eustis.

"You are an odd girl, Rhoda," cried Miriam.

"So you will think when I disclose *my* plan for our summer vacation. I move that we spend July and August at the White Mountains, in New Hampshire, near Franconia."

"Perhaps you will also move that we inherit a fortune."

"So I would, if it would do any good," laughed Rhoda. "But recess is over; wait for me after school, and then I will tell you how we can go to the White Mountains without the fortune."

Late in July the guests at the Sahna House were thrown into violent excitement by a telegram which their host received. This telegram was as brief as most of its kind, yet it spoke volumes. It announced that a young Captain, who had covered himself with glory in a recent Indian assault, a member of the United States Senate, who was both rich and unmarried, two Governors of neighbouring States, and Mr. A., "the very handsomest man in New England," would arrive at the Sahna about noon, would dine there, and remain all night.

Of course the "leading" ladies convinced the landlord that he must give a grand dance that evening, and, his consent obtained, they resolved themselves into a committee of the whole on the important subject of dress. As if the valiant Captain or the wealthy Senator would pay any attention to such details!

No one was late for dinner that day. Promptly at two o'clock (for early dinners and substantial suppers were the rule there) the dining-room doors were thrown open, and mine host bowed his distinguished guests to the central table, while the undistinguished crowd rustled and bustled to their accustomed seats.

The young Captain and the elderly Senator glanced at the lady waiters and then glanced at one another, the latter exclaiming:

"By jove! Are they servants or guests?"

"Not exactly either," replied the landlord, who heard the remark. "Every one of these young ladies, whose pleasant duty it will be to serve your dinner, is a governess. You see, Mr. Brown—who keeps the Lone Elm Hotel, down at Xenia—had a number of young students as waiters last summer, and they were so satisfactory that I thought I'd try an improvement on his plan. So this spring I wrote to some friends and asked them if they knew of any school teachers who wanted two months in the mountains this year. I offered to give them four dollars a week, do all their washing, pay their railroad fare and see that they were treated as ladies while they were here. The result you see for yourself."

"I see a number of bright-faced, neatly-dressed girls, instead of the usual sombre array of African faces," said the Captain; "and I consider it very refreshing."

"And I see an exquisitely-appointed dinner table," added the Senator. "Look at those graceful ferns and nodding grasses in the

vases up and down the table; what ordinary waiter would think of utilising such simple adornments?"

"The lady who superintends laying the table is a teacher of geometry, and I am told that her intimate acquaintance with curves and angles is the reason that she never has a table-cloth crooked or a row of knives and forks all points of the compass."

"How do your guests treat them?"

"According to their several dispositions. Those who are really gentlefolk treat them as their equals—as many of them are; those who have more money than brains, or more fashion than pedigree, are either amusingly condescending or almost rude. But the girls laugh in their sleeves at the latter, and keep out of their way as much as possible."

"Some of these young ladies are, I presume, members of good families?"

"Oh, yes! more than one. We have the daughter of a really famous botanist, two nieces of distinguished divines, who count back to the *Mayflower*, one whose father was a geologist and member of a dozen literary societies in Germany, and yet another whose history is peculiar—that one in the blue dress, who is filling Governor Catlin's glass. She, Miss Thorndyke, is great-granddaughter of a Judge of the State Supreme Court, the granddaughter of a physician whose name is known all over our part of America, and the daughter of a clergyman. At her father's death, she, the eldest of six girls, went out into the world as a governess, and she was one of the first to accept my offer. When she first came she was thin, pale, and fagged out; but look at her now!"

"What a sensible thing these overworked teachers have done!" cried the Senator. "Here they get mental rest, bracing air, and a little money, while their over-proud companions are either shut up in the city or spending their scant savings in boarding at a farmhouse. You must introduce me to some of these ladies, so that I may have a little conversation with them. I admire their genuine independence."

And, though it has no connection with my story, I will just mention that the Senator ultimately married one of these governesses, to the dismay of all the belles who had dressed, danced, sung, smiled, and chattered for his especial delectation.

This had been Rhoda Crosby's plan.

At first Miriam Thorndyke had somewhat recoiled from it, but at last she thus reasoned: "I am tired and half ill; I absolutely need mountain or sea air; but at the end of this quarter, after paying my mother's rent and one or two small bills of my own, I shall possess the enormous sum of twenty dollars, which must last until October. At this hotel I shall get the change I need, and the work will not be arduous. As for the position—well, I am a lady, and so long as I conduct myself as a lady, what need I care whether any scorn me? And as for"—here a mental pause—"well, as for friends,

they will not be friends if they think less of me for doing a little honest work."

For "friends," reader, substitute "Ralph Kenrick."

If Kenrick had been a declared lover, if Miriam had been actually engaged to him, there would have been no such hesitancy on her part; she would have referred Rhoda's plan to him, and would have abided by his decision.

Mr. Kenrick had come to Plainford about the middle of the preceding winter, to recuperate after a long and weakening illness, and as the relatives with whom he then made it his home were well acquainted with Miriam, the invalid lawyer and the young school-mistress soon became friends. They had many tastes in common, and as both were heart-whole it was not at all surprising that their friendship should appear to be ripening into love and prospective matrimony.

But weeks grew into months, and although Kenrick monopolised all Miriam's spare hours, and seemed to be jealous of even her girl friends, especially Rhoda, he did not speak the love he evidently felt. To Miriam this constant companionship, this protecting affection, was very sweet. That he loved her she could not doubt; every look and tone breathed it: so she enjoyed the present and rested content with the thought that when he saw fit to do so he would utter the decisive words that more than once had trembled on his tongue.

A few days before Rhoda suggested this trip to the White Mountains, Kenrick had left Plainford very suddenly. He sent a few lines to Miriam saying that he was obliged to go to the Pacific coast on important business, but hoped to see her again early in the autumn. What this business was no one, except perhaps his relatives, had any idea; and as these relatives had decidedly objected to his excessive devotion to Miriam, "only a poor governess, and there are so many wealthy girls in town, younger, prettier, and more attractive," they murmured, they vouchsafed her no explanation.

Judge then, if you can, of the multiplicity of sentiments which surged in Miriam's bosom when she saw Ralph Kenrick enter the dining-room of the Sahn House the day that the party of notables arrived. He was not travelling with them, but had accidentally come, with one or two friends, at the same time.

Fortunately it was not Miriam's duty to wait on him (she knew she could not have done that), as she was stationed at the table behind his chair; but she could see him, could observe that his long journey had vastly improved his appearance, and could hear his voice, and this was enough for the present.

He ate his dinner leisurely, and did not seem to be at all conscious that he was the cynosure of many bright eyes. Men of any age, but particularly young men, are decidedly in the minority at the American summer resorts; and the advent of a tall, good-looking, well-dressed, well-mannered man, with no visible female encumbrances, opens up a

mental vista of a thousand possibilities to all of the opposite sex. He *may* prove to be a good dancer, a musician, an expert at croquet or lawn tennis, or—the acme of good luck—he may be a wealthy bachelor in search of a wife. So placid was he that Miriam heard one young lady exclaim to her next neighbour:

"That unknown Adonis, Mrs. Tower's vis-à-vis, is certainly a married man! No one but a newly-made Benedict could so stolidly ignore Kitty Tower's big blue eyes and peachy cheeks and encouraging glances."

Miriam smiled as she listened.

But a moment later she ceased to smile, as she accidentally overheard a few words that Kenrick uttered.

"Didn't I tell you? I certainly intended to. Why, I married her, of course! Juliet Eustis was too charming in every way—and too rich—to be left to single blessedness."

"I don't quite understand how you managed it," interrupted his friend, in a tone of surprise. "Wasn't there another girl, Maude Somebody, that you ——"

"Miriam, not Maude," was Kenrick's suggestion. "Oh! there was no *engagement* there. I did prefer Miriam at first, but I changed my mind. I'll go more into detail by-and-by."

Kenrick's friend may have cared to hear the details, Miriam did not. Sick at heart she hurried away as soon as she had removed the plates and cups (collecting these had detained her just behind Kenrick, so that she was compelled to overhear his words), and never cast a glance in his direction.

Her idol was fallen, her love had been wasted, her confidence had been most ill bestowed, and her bright dreams for the future were suddenly converted into a hideous night-mare. He had "changed his mind," forsooth! And in so doing he had changed the current of her life, Miriam said to herself bitterly; had turned her light into darkness, her day into dawnless night.

"Miriam," whispered Rhoda to her, a few moments after she had overheard this unexpected news, "Mr. Kenrick is here. Have you seen him?"

"Yes," was the reply.

"Did he see you?"

"I think not—I hope not."

"Surely you don't imagine that he would think less of you because you are *here*?"

"What if he does?" was the surprising answer.

Rhoda's eyes asked the explanation that her tongue hesitated about. Miriam continued:

"I wonder how many people in Plainford suspected that he had gone West to be married? Did you?"

"What! He—married—and not to"—Rhoda checked herself abruptly. "How did you hear of it?"

Miriam gave her all the information that she herself possessed, and added :

"Pray do not mention this. He seemed to wish it kept a secret, and if he chooses to go about as a bachelor it is not necessary for us to spoil his sport."

In the course of the afternoon Kenrick accidentally met Rhoda in one of the corridors, and was astonished at her frigid greeting. Regardless of his outstretched hand and cordial smile she walked swiftly past him, noticing his salutation only by a stately "Good-morning."

Kenrick was so nonplussed that he did not exhibit or really feel much surprise when he also met Miriam. At first the latter thought she would simply bow and pass on, but pride suggested a different course; she politely clasped his proffered hand, asked and replied to the usual commonplace questions regarding his and her present and past health, and then had to explain that she was not a guest but a servitor at the Sahna House.

"I presume you will return to your home by the first of September?" he asked.

"Yes; the schools re-open then, and we shall exchange a nominal servitude for a real one. I ask no harder taskmaster than a class of schoolgirls fresh from midsummer holidays."

"I hope to be in Plainford about the ninth or tenth of September."

"Ah! You do not go West again?"

"No. What is the matter, Miss Thorndyke?" he asked abruptly. "You do not seem like yourself."

"Whom do I resemble?"

"No one! You are as—as cool as if we were strangers, not old friends."

"Acquaintances of a few months, you mean. We never met until last winter."

"It is a beautiful evening. Will you not get your hat and take a little stroll with me?"

"Thank you, Mr. Kenrick, but I must beg to be excused."

"You are not busy now?"

"Oh, no; but all the same, I prefer to remain at home this evening."

"Have I offended you in any way?"

"Offended me! Oh, no!" she cried, with a little laugh that was not quite natural. In her effort to make her words sound careless she was unconsciously somewhat artificial. "But the truth is, Mr. Kenrick, that I accidentally overheard your confidential communication to your friend at the dinner table to-day, and, under existing circumstances, I think it best that you and I should break off our former pleasant friendship."

"Do you really mean that that need come between us?"

Miriam was now really offended.

"Most certainly," she answered. "Your question surprises me,

and the fact that you could even ask such a question confirms me in my decision. I want no man to call himself my friend who is not thoroughly open. I heard you caution your companion to keep your secret —”

“It wasn’t that I was ashamed of it, but I didn’t want to have all the gossips busy with my name,” he eagerly explained.

“You have heard me express my opinion on such matters before, I think.”

“I have, but I thought you would make a difference in my favour. Oh, Miriam! surely you loved me a little.”

“Mr. Kenrick, you are insolent!” cried Miriam. And, turning from him abruptly, she hastened down the corridor and was soon out of sight.

And when some of her Plainford friends asked her, that autumn, if she had ever regretted her summer at the Sahna House, she truthfully replied:

“By no means! On the contrary, I think it was one of the wisest things I ever did; the experience I gained while there was worth a great deal to me.”

She did not consider it necessary to explain what that experience was, however. She kept her own counsel, even when one of Ralph Kenrick’s cousins said:

“Ralph was at Sahna, I hear. Of course you saw him?”

“Oh, yes.”

“And, doubtless, heard of his good fortune? He would hardly keep it a secret from *you*,” a decided emphasis on this last word.

“Was he not fortunate?”

“I hope it will prove a fortunate thing for him.”

“Money is very handy to have in the house; and Ralph couldn’t marry without it.”

“Did you go to the country or to the sea this summer?” was Miriam’s way of declining to discuss Ralph’s matrimonial venture.

How does news travel? Miriam told no one, except Rhoda, what she had heard Ralph say to his friend, and Rhoda always declared that she had never breathed it to a single soul; yet before the autumn leaves had lost their glory of crimson and gold, scarlet, lemon, brown, and russet, it was generally understood in Plainford that young Kenrick had married that summer a girl with no end of money, and all his devotion to Miriam Thorndyke meant nothing.

Luckily Miriam did not know that a score of tongues were discussing her “disappointment”; she had not the least notion how often she was pitied because Kenrick had jilted her. It was quite enough to have bestowed her love on a worthless object; this half-contemptuous pity would have nearly maddened her had she been cognisant of it.

One beautiful afternoon, early in November, Miriam was walking home from school by an unusual and out-of-the-way route; the rich

glory of Indian summer had beguiled her into a long solitary stroll, and she thought of nothing less than of meeting with Ralph Kenrick. But a sudden turn in the suburban street, almost a country lane, brought these two face to face. Both were, for a moment, too much embarrassed to speak. Woman's quick wit, however, stood Miriam in good service, and she was the first to break the awkward silence.

"Mr. Kenrick! Is it really you?" she said.

"It is, indeed. You seem surprised to see me, but I told you I intended coming here this autumn."

"A flying visit?"

"I hardly know. It depends upon—upon circumstances. I *may* decide to settle here."

"How will your wife like our quiet town, after gay San Francisco?" Miriam was determined to allude to his wife just as if there had never been a probability that she might fill that place.

"My wife!"

"Yes," answered Miriam, surprised at his evident amazement. "You forget that I knew of her existence."

"Then you knew more than I ever did. I have no wife. What do you mean?"

"Is she dead?" asked Miriam, gently.

But her tenderness was wasted: Kenrick laughed heartily as he answered:

"She never existed! I have never been married. What made you suspect such a thing?"

"Mr. Kenrick, your jests are ill-timed, if you *are* jesting. Remember, I heard you tell your friend at the Sahna House that you had married Juliet Eustis."

Kenrick's puzzled face grew strangely luminant. Stopping suddenly in the unfrequented street he looked straight into Miriam's soft dark eyes, and said earnestly:

"Was that all that you heard?"

"Not quite, but it was enough."

"Pardon me, it was not. So that was why you were so cool to me? If you had heard the whole of my conversation that day, you would have heard that my hasty journey to San Francisco was on account of a play—a light, *very* light comedy—that I had written. A manager there made me a good offer for it, on condition that I would make a few alterations in it, and I preferred to discuss the changes with him by word of mouth."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I was ashamed to do so until I was sure the play would be successful. I remembered how severe you had always been upon men of genius or average ability who lent their pens to such work; how often you had expressed your contempt of a man who would write a sensational play or novel."

"Who is Juliet Eustis?"

"The heroine of my comedy. The hero was, at first, in love with Miriam Arnold (I wrote the play before I knew you, or I should never have taken that name), but she did not fall in love with him, so I married him to Juliet. Oh, Miriam! what a mean opinion you must have had of me. No wonder you said I insulted you if you thought I was a married man. No, Miriam! I am not married, and never shall be unless you will be my wife. Surely you must have known that I loved you?"

They were nearing the town, and Kenrick had to choose his words and guard his tones, but he was determined not to be misunderstood this time.

"You said," replied Miriam, with crimson cheeks and happy, downcast eyes, "that you *did* prefer Miriam but had changed your mind, so how was I to know any better?"

"Did I say that? I assure you it was not this Miriam of whom I spoke. Wait until you see the play—oh, by the way, it brought me some two thousand dollars, and I have made an engagement to write another at once, so now that I can afford to furnish a house I may venture to seek a wife. Miriam, I am not a rich man, but I can work for you; I can give you a comfortable home, a loving heart, and an untarnished name."

Miriam was obliged to defer her reply; a mutual friend met them at that very inopportune moment, and began to offer Kenrick her congratulations upon his marriage.

"Have you heard that absurd story?" he replied. "Thank you for your good wishes, though they are premature."

"Isn't he married, Miriam?" asked the incredulous friend.

"Not yet," was the unthinking answer.

"O—h, I see! It is a little too soon. Good afternoon," and the friend hastened away to spread the news that Kenrick was not married, but was engaged to Miriam.

"I didn't mean ——" began Miriam, with blushing cheeks.

"Don't say it, my darling!" he interrupted. "Say that you did mean all that your 'not yet' implied."

Her answer may be imagined. And in a few months she became his wife, although he had married Juliet Eustis, just as he told his friend when Miriam heard but half the story.



ERNA.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "OUR LADY OF TEARS."

DEEP blue eyes, large and tender and dreamy, a shining of golden hair, lips as exquisite as ever were sung by poet, and lending by their great beauty the crowning charm to an almost perfect face. This vision that brightened for me my life in the dim old manor-house might have been Psyche, lighted upon English ground in her search for Cupid, but a Psyche to whom Love, as yet, was nothing but a name.

I would have given life itself to have heard her in the last hour of it confess me dear to her, to have had one kiss from those perfect lips, as I lay dying, pressed on mine. But when I had half-hinted at my madness, half-looked it, she had shrunk from me; and snatching her hand from the clasp in which I prisoned it, had said to me very decidedly: "No, Gerald. If you would not have me remember how very distant our cousinship is, never dare speak of this to me again." And I never had, being in my love for her very much of a coward; but the eager hunger was always there. And she saw it, I think, and seemed sometimes half to mock at, sometimes to resent my love.

It was happiness—a happiness, though, that came strangely near to pain—to be thrown so much in her society as in the summer that followed her curt rejection of my suit. I had been flung in a wrestle for honours at Cambridge, and had reaped a fever instead, which had very nearly landed me where failure cannot disturb. When I had tottered a few feeble steps back from death's door into the way of life again, there came to me a great happiness. Erna and I had met until now only during the rare visits that her father paid to the pretty villa, west from London, where my mother had lived quietly during the ten years of her widowhood. They were distant cousins, and had been lovers long ago; or rather on his side there had been love, faintly responded to on hers; and at last she had broken off the engagement with a plea of relationship. He left her, and for many years they did not meet again; but I think he was never able either to forgive or to forget.

How is it when into our life there comes a bitterness like his—when we marry, and waking in the dead of night see not the face that lies on the marriage-pillow beside us, but other eyes that look on us tenderly and sweetly out of the darkness of the long ago? I put questions of this kind to myself many times, I well remember, in the summer when the happiness I speak of came to me—that time when her father's invitation to visit the old Devon manor-house being given and accepted, Erna and I lived week after week under the same grey roof, and I

gathered strength in drinking in the light that laughed on me from her eyes, and strolled with her in the Devon woods or floated with oar and sail amid the dream-like loveliness of the Dart.

She had the kindest, tenderest, gayest temper all the time that mine was still but the ghost of a life ; but as I changed gradually to something more nearly resembling my old self, Erna began to change too, and was presently almost the same strange provoking girl I had known in the days when I laid my heart at her feet only to be trampled on. I would not repeat the folly ; to be scorned once by any lips, however lovely, was enough.

We were alone in the garden one morning, and I was thinking this, and at the same time how rare was the beauty of her face, when she looked up and our eyes met. She did not blush, or turn from the glance that I was bending on her, but only smiled mockingly—a smile that passed next moment into a laugh, as wickedly provoking as herself. I was turning away, hurt, I scarcely knew why, when she stopped me with an imperious bidding.

"Gerald," she said, "if you care to come with me to the Winstanley room, I am just in the humour for telling you its legend. I can tell it nowhere but in the room itself."

"The haunted chamber ?" I questioned, indolently. "I'm not in the humour, Erna, if you are ; the morning's too bright to be spent anywhere but out of doors, and the story's certainly old enough to keep. I'm for staying here in this glorious old garden, and fancying it Eden, and you its Eve."

"Stay, then," she said, with a pout, and moved away.

I watched her passing farther and farther from me towards the house. Great roses were all about me, the air was faint with the odours of the honeysuckle, and overhead thick branches drooped caressingly, and only left here and there an opening for the burning sun to shine through. In a moment, it seemed to me, all would be grey and drooping ; for in a moment more all that made the garden fair to me would have passed from it with her. She turned, however, as she reached the green, broken steps that led up to the terrace before the house, and seeing me rise and move towards her, hesitated a moment, and then came slowly back.

"So you are coming, after all," she said, ungraciously.

"Yes, I'm coming," I echoed. "And I'll listen patiently to anything you like to inflict on me, Erna, beginning with the ghost that walks at night in ——"

"Winstanley's ghost, you mean," she interrupted. "He does walk—he has been seen at least once in every generation of Heathcotts since the time of his master, Geoffrey Heathcott. You laugh at me," she continued, a flash of defiance in her great eyes, "but I tell you I *do* believe in him—in his haunting the house where his death was the cause of his master's."

"Why should he haunt it ? It can't be a pleasure to him, I should

imagine, to haunt a place where, if you and your legends are to be trusted, his dying so inconveniently was the cause of Geoffrey Heathcott dying also. Does he hope that in the course of a few centuries his master's remains—they are hidden away somewhere, are they not?—may become unsubstantial enough for even a ghost to give them burial?"

"You dull, silly fellow! I know what old Winstanley would want to show to me, but I shudder at the very thought of passing a night in that horrible room they name after him."

"And what would he want to show you?" I asked.

"The secret of the secret chamber, to be sure. He would lead the way to that part of the house where it lies; and then, if I had courage enough to follow him, he would indicate to me in his ghostly pantomime how to enter it—show me where the spring is, and how it works. Then, if I had the still greater courage to look in, I should see—oh! I should see—" pressing her hands with a gesture of mimic terror before her eyes—"bones lying there—the bones of that gallant and noble gentleman that we Heathcotts are so proud to think was our ancestor."

I looked at her, uncertain as to how much of her speech was jest, how much earnest, puzzled to know whether she put faith in the family ghost, or not. "You would not dare sleep in the room they call Winstanley's?" I questioned. "Are you so superstitious, Erna, as to say that seriously?"

Erna darted at me her most indignant glance, by way of acknowledgment of my question. "Are you so great a hero yourself, Gerald, that you would care to sleep in it?" she asked.

"You forget," I said, lightly, "that I have not seen this chamber of horrors yet."

"See it now, then," she flashed out. "Come with me, and tell me if you would care to have it for your own while you stay here."

She ran off before I could answer; and I followed slowly to the house, and found her, after some minutes' search, returning from the housekeeper's private sanctum. "Now," she said, holding up a key that left deep stains of rust on her dainty fingers—"now for the haunted room!"

I was not thinking of it, or of the legend connected with it, as I followed her there. How could I think of a room and a legend centuries old with that fair young face beside me? Sweet face—grown something more matronly now than in the days when the world seemed to me a thing that, if I had it, might be laid at those feet for one kiss from those lips—I have but to close my eyes, and you are before me again, as bright and sunny as in the bright time of your girlhood. How sweetly the vision shines on me! I see the calm old woods of Devon, and rising from them the roof of a grey manor-house, its twin vanes shining redly in the morning sun; through the trees are caught glimpses of the windings of the Dart,

and the far-off blue of the sea, and wooded peak melting softly into peak, and fading in the haze of the distance as fades a dream.

I followed her through the inhabited part of the old house that summer's morning with little in my mind beyond the thought that she was fair, and that I loved her. We turned presently into a narrow, badly-lighted passage; and at the sight of ancient doors on either side of me other thoughts came into my mind—thoughts of those who had been this fair creature's ancestors. In these rooms they had lived and died; here the spirit of one of them—Geoffrey, the Cavalier Heathcott, who had fought as bravely as foolishly for the Stuart cause—was supposed sometimes to wander restlessly from midnight to cock-crow. I knew nothing more of the legend told of him than that his end had been strange and dreadful, and that his fate was in some way connected with that of his steward, Winstanley, whose name had been given to the room where Erna was now leading me.

"You care nothing for my legends, Gerald," she said, her voice breaking in suddenly on my thoughts. She had stopped before a door of especially uninviting appearance, and now unlocked it. "You might say that in any of the rooms below, or even here in the day-time; but—" beckoning me to enter—"would you dare repeat it at twelve at night, and alone in a room like this?"

"You don't think much of my nerves, I see, Erna," I answered, following her into the haunted room.

A strange, gloomy place it was, scantily furnished in the fashion of at least a century before, and having in one corner an antique bed, dating back, perhaps, to the time of Anne or George I. I found myself looking at this with an uncomfortable feeling that perhaps the ghostly steward, after his nightly walks through the old house, might lie down in it sometimes in preference to his grave. "Erna," I asked of the girl beside me, "do you say that mortals have quite given up occupying this room?"

"My grandfather once or twice slept here, or so I have heard," she answered. "He must have been a brave man—worthy of the Cavalier race he came from."

"Is the ghost so terrible a ghost, then, to encounter?"

"Terrible to a Heathcott," she said, seriously. "I know you will laugh at me, Gerald, and perhaps the fancy is a silly one, but I never come here without feeling that every word of the story they tell of the room must be true. Out of it, I am more of a sceptic about my ghosts."

"I'll hear the story before I laugh at you," I answered. I was more curious about the legend, standing in this dim old room, than I had been half an hour before, when resting at Erna's feet with the roses about us and the blue of the sky above, and finding in her eyes a blue between sky and violet, and in her cheek the rose's faintest, most exquisite blush.

She told me her story that fair summer's morning—told it half-laughingly, as was in her nature to do, and yet with something of earnestness breaking out more and more visibly, as the gloomy legend blackened to its close.

Geoffrey Heathcott, one of the most faithful and foolish adherents to a bad King and worthless cause, left England in despair soon after the terrible 30th of January, 1649; but returned next year to follow the fortunes of Prince Charles from Stirling to the fatal field of Worcester. He escaped with his life, and after shifting for many months from one place of concealment to another, ventured back, sometime in 1653, to Devon and Heathcott Manor, and lived there, undisturbed by the Protector's government, until, unhappily for himself, he became implicated in an abortive scheme for a rising in the West. He was seized, effected the same night a daring escape, and fled, with a party of Ironsides in fierce pursuit, to Heathcott House. The search that the Parliamentarians conducted there was at first without result; but General Harrison, their savage commander, was not a man to be easily baulked. He had the old steward of the family brought before him, and threatened him with instant death unless he would betray his master's hiding-place. The old man, still protesting his ignorance, was dragged to the chamber that had ever since been known by his name, and there a party of musketeers were told off to fire on him. Harrison had, however, secretly given orders only to load with powder. The volley killed Winstanley none the less: his frail hold of life was not to be thus rudely played with. When the soldiers lifted the old man from where he had fallen, they found him dead.

"And his ghost, of course, has ever since haunted the scene of his murder," I broke in, when Erna's legend had reached this point: "according to the foolish custom prevalent among ghosts of haunting the neighbourhoods that must be most disagreeable to them. But I don't see why this poor old spirit should be so very dreadful to a Heathcott."

"His master was never heard of afterwards," said Erna, slowly and solemnly.

"Well?"

"Don't you see, Gerald, that the old man's murderers were right, and that he was the only person whom Geoffrey Heathcott had trusted with the secret of his hiding-place? It is true the rumour at the time went that our ancestor had escaped to Spain, and died there; but I don't believe it. I believe that what the legend says of him is true."

"And what does the legend say of this mysterious Geoffrey?"

"It says that he had taken refuge in a hiding-place contrived in Elizabeth's time by his Catholic grandfather—a small cell that, unhappily for him, by an oversight of the architect, could only be opened from without, and so made a prisoner of anyone who was hidden there."

"So that," I said, catching at her meaning, "if the old steward were really his master's only confidant, the poor prisoner would in the present case have been buried alive."

Erna did not answer: she drew closer to me, and looked round her with a shudder. "Come away," she said, catching at my arm. "I feel as though if I stayed here longer the air would choke me. Let us get away from these frightful memories and this horrid room. I would not sleep here for the world—I should wake up with a start at midnight, and see the old steward standing at my bedside, and beckoning me to follow him, that he might show me where his master's bones are hidden."

"They are hidden, then, to this day?"

"So the legend says; but when I begged my father to have all this part of the old house pulled down that they may be found and buried, he only laughed at me. But till they *are* found and buried, I feel that this will be a haunted room. The man who was killed here will never rest in his grave till he knows that his master has one too."

I laughed at her wild suggestion; and she turned indignantly from me, and flitted like a sunbeam from the quaint, dark chamber; leaving me to turn on its ghosts and its silence a key that grated eerily in the rusty lock, and to follow her at my leisure to the garden.

"Gerald," my entertainer said to me, curtly, that evening, after dinner, "you're a fool, and this little daughter of mine's a goose; and if the goose must needs tempt the fool into ghost-hunting, by raking up for his benefit some of the ridiculous old legends that are sure to cling about a tumble-down place like this, why, I don't know that I feel called upon to interfere. I'll put no more serious obstacle in your way than a promise of laughing at you when you catch a cold, instead of your ghost. You'll find the quarters you want to occupy rather damp, and there's more than a suspicion of rats about them; but try them by all means—try them," concluded Mr. Heathcott, with a yawn; "and if you can stand the damp and the rats for a night or two, let me know at the end of the time how you liked your bed-room."

I dreamed that night of having fallen asleep in the great old bed in the haunted room, and of waking with a start and a shiver to find a skeleton lying beside me. I had taken, I scarcely knew why, a violent aversion to that bed. "Luckily," I murmured to myself, as I woke in reality, and found the bright June sunlight shining through the venetians of my room, and falling on gaily-tinted wall-paper and the glittering brass of my bedstead, "I've given no pledge to sleep in it. It's enough, surely, to be about to occupy for a week a family vault, without one's also becoming the tenant of a hearse." And when I had, with the old gardener to help me, dragged the cumbrous, funereal thing into a smaller room adjoining the ghostly one, and my own smart French bedstead had been carried up to

replace it, I felt almost as though what I had done had exorcised the ghost.

I could not tell why, but that first night in Winstanley's room was the most restless that I spent there. There was a sickening atmosphere of death and decay about the place; and I tossed in my bed restlessly from side to side, and gasped as if the air I breathed would choke me. At last I got up, and dragging one of the heavy antique chairs before the nearer of the two old casements, flung it wide open to the June night, and sat there smoking. The two narcotics—night-air and tobacco—soothed me to sleep at last; and I woke some hours afterwards with an uncomfortable sense of having already realised my host's prediction, and of being about to carry down to breakfast a violent cold, and no tidings of the ghost.

Erna was in the garden, as her absence from the breakfast-room assured me. As for Mr. Heathcott, I doubt if he had seen the sun rise once in the last ten years, unless from the windows of his bedroom. I stole softly out into the open air, and down the tangled alleys of the dear old garden. I knew the corner that she would seek—where roses grew red and white among the white and yellow of the tangled honeysuckle, and here and there between the bushes bloomed fragrant masses of clove and pink, and the faint air in stealing past drooped heavy with the perfumed breath of flowers.

I stole on her softly, and the next moment had caught her in my arms, and my lips for a moment brushed her cheek.

She started from me—red as the roses she was gathering. "Mr. Osborne," she said, "how dare you!"

Then her eyes sought mine with an eager interest as she gently disengaged herself. "Oh, Gerald," she cried, "have you seen *him*?"

"Who? The Winstanley of the legend?" I questioned, laughing at her. "No, Erna; the ghost's as civil and unobtrusive a ghost as one could desire, and doesn't seem even inclined to haunt my dreams."

I remember, as if that dead year had been yesterday, how shy she was of me all that day, and how when we parted in the evening her hand rather touched mine than clasped it, and she bade me the coldest of "Good-nights." We met the next morning at the breakfast-table, and I laughed as I caught her eyes fixed on me for a moment with an eager, questioning gaze. "No, Erna," I said, "not yet."

"Not yet," I could have answered also on the third morning of my broken slumbers in that low-browed, shadowy room, where the rats and the wind between them made uncanny noises in the far-off corners, and one started broad awake in the dark hours after midnight, and looked and listened, with a vague fear lest the dead should also be awake. When one starts broad awake in a room reputed to

be haunted, and hears vague noises in the darkness, it is hard for the moment not to have faith in ghosts.

I had a dream on the fourth night of my imprisonment in that room that chilled me into an ague-fit of terror, and from which I woke shivering, and with a wild cry forcing itself from me in the greatness of my fear. I had dreamed of being alone with one long dead, and that the thing had touched me; and when I woke, trembling, and with the cold dew of my terror upon me, I was not in the room where I had fallen asleep, but in that to which, as it had seemed to me in my dream, the dead had led me.

I went down as haggard as a man might be whom such dreams had haunted, and paced the terrace before the old house, thinking feverishly of them. Birds sang in the trees around me; the morning air was cool to my hot forehead; and in the eastern sky there was lit a herald redness, that crimsoned momentarily into a more glorious proclamation of the advent of the sun. And even as the god of Day leapt up in all the brightness that only the eye of the eagle can look on from his burning couch of cloud, twin stars shone out on the morning also—the stars that lure man on to his bliss or his bale; and there danced and sparkled from under a shining of golden hair the light of a girl's bright eyes. Erna had risen as early as the sun, and but little later than myself; and stealing softly on me, her voice breathed as softly in my ear, while I stood there lost in gloomy musings and unconscious of her coming, the gay greeting: "*Beau chevalier!*"

I started, and turned almost fiercely. "*Erna,*" I said, by way of excuse and explanation for my abruptness, "*I took you for the moment for a continuation of my dreams.*"

"*Your dreams, Gerald!*" Her face flushed, her voice grew eager. "*There are no dreams in Winstanley's room. Tell me—what have you seen?*"

But I was in no mood at the moment for explanation, and I turned away without answering her question or satisfying her curiosity.

Early that afternoon, when the glory of the June day was at its brightest, we took our way through the dim and dusty passages of the uninhabited part of the old house, and, after awhile, stood silent and side by side in the room to which, if I might credit my dream, no earthly guide had led me.

It was a dim old chamber, darker and smaller than that called after the traditionary Winstanley, and in a far more hopeless state of disrepair. Once it had been an oratory, and the single and beautifully-shapen window had blazed with coloured glass, and from the carven woodwork of the walls there had looked down the faces of the twelve Apostles; but the glass was long since gone, and the Apostles presented now but a succession of indistinctly outlined lineaments, falling year by year into more irreparable decay. I went from one blurred mask to the other, vainly seeking to recognise that before which, as it

seemed to me in my dream, my ghostly guide had paused for a moment, and, pointing to it, had vanished from my sight. I stopped at last at one which, centuries before, had in all probability imaged forth the face of Peter, and, considering it attentively, felt some dim uncertainty of a recognition dawn upon me. "Erna," I said, "it was this."

We searched long for the secret that Erna persisted in believing lay hidden behind that bit of carven wood. The June day wore slowly out, afternoon was creeping into evening, but still, though the sun sank in the west, and the shadowy twilight began to lend an added dimness to the chamber, those small white fingers followed patiently every line of carving in the grim old panel and the grimmer face that frowned above it, and the bright eyes watched tirelessly for some clue as to where might lurk the spring that it was Erna's wild fancy lay somewhere hidden for her to press.

At last, tired of by turns aiding in and laughing at this wild quest, I menaced Erna that, unless she yielded to my often-repeated entreaty and abandoned it, I would leave her to seek for secret springs and hidden crypts alone. Then I turned towards the door, as if to carry out my threat.

She fled past me, rapid as a legendary fay, and, placing one hand upon the lock, with the other waved me back. "Gerald," she said, half laughing, and yet with a strange, sweet coaxing in her voice, "I want you to promise that as long as I choose to seek in this room for the secret I think it will give up to us, you will not leave me."

I had not meant to speak to her of my love. What was there in her words that they should thrill some subtle nerve within me, and send strange passion burning through my veins? I took her hand in mine—her slight girl's hand—and my eyes sought hers with a wild desire to read my destiny in them. "Erna," I said, "look up."

She bent her head still lower. I could see only the crimsoned cheek, and the golden head that drooped above it.

"You said once that if I ever dared to speak to you of love again, it would force you to remember that we were scarcely even cousins. I dare it now; I will be something more than a cousin to you, or we shall part. Erna, I say now, and more boldly than a year ago—I love you."

Still no answer; and the cheek flushed more and more, and the golden head drooped lower.

"I love you, Erna," I repeated, trying vainly to make her lift her face to mine.

Something in her silence and her blush emboldened me. I drew her gently to me, and—and


"The ghosts have given you to me, Erna," I said, releasing her—as she rather shrank from me, blushing, and hid her glowing

face against the carved wall from which the stony-visaged saints frowned grimly down on our betrothal kiss.

And I stretched out my hand and laid it lightly on hers, as it rested on a dark and mouldered thing, in which there yet lurked indistinct suggestions of the treachery of Judas. I felt the warm, soft hand tremble under mine, and struggle to escape me; and, tightening my clasp, there came next instant a frightened cry from Erna; then a rush into our faces of cold air, as, with a grating and sullen sound, the wall gave way an inch or two. And then, the spring refusing to act, closed heavily again, and left us standing there, looking wildly into each other's faces, alone with our wilder thoughts, and with the coming of the night.

We buried the bones that were found in that ghastly hiding-place, when a way was at last broken into it, in the old vault of the Heathcotts; and in the church beyond Erna stood with me next summer at the altar-rails, and exchanged with me the vows that made us man and wife. But when the time of roses came again, and a young life was born into our new home, far away from the Devon hills, her vow of obedience was, for the first time, broken. She insisted, in opposition to my wish, on naming our first-born Geoffrey.

And so Geoffrey, the stout cavalier of Marston and Worcester fights, sleeps his last sleep in the calm woods through which wind the clear waters of the Dart; and to the old manor-house, whose vanes rise glittering above those woods, come sometimes mother and child. And then, while the hot June sunlight pours through unglazed casement and shattered wall, and floods with its golden glory the place in which our ancestor's bones were found, Geoffrey, his young namesake, peers fearfully into that narrow crypt, and listens while, with his mother's hand clasped in his, the story of how that ancestor perished there is retold.



JOHN DONNE.

IN the year 1573, the year after all Christendom had rung with the fearful tidings of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, in an English Roman Catholic family of moderate social position and fairly competent means, a child was born, who one day was to show, both by word and deed, that the Protestant blood shed in that terrible night had not flowed in vain, whose hand was to be one of the strongest stretched out to pick up the torch of truth that had fallen from the martyr's dying grasp. It was many a year, however, before John Donne, for that was this child's name, began to give any sign of what his future story was to be. Brought up a Roman Catholic, throughout his youth he seems to have felt no depth of religious impression.

John Donne's scholastic education began early. He was sent to Hart Hall, Oxford, at the age of eleven. The notion of a child being thus made an inhabitant of grave old collegiate cloisters strikes our modern minds as strange and almost comical, but there was nothing strange or comic in such a circumstance to English men and women of the 16th century. Boys were then usually college students long before they had reached the threshold of earliest manhood, and Oxford and Cambridge were both quite ready to receive the most juvenile schoolboys into their reverent shadows.

When Donne had got his young foot once firmly planted on the first step of the ladder of learning, he was not slow in bounding up higher and higher. His lively fancy already began to show itself, and it made him quicker of perception than most boys of his age. He not only mastered and digested all his books, but he also, during the hours they were in his hand, breathed and moved in the very midst of the times of which they spoke. This made for him a delight in his studies such as few lads have ever known. His imagination—the imagination which, while his youth was still in its first green leaf, was to blossom into poetry—made for him the driest subject fresh and bright.

His relations were proud of their boy, as well they might be, and in order that he might enjoy new advantages they removed him at fourteen from Hart Hall, Oxford, to Trinity College, Cambridge; following in this also the custom of the times with regard to education, for then it was no uncommon thing for a lad to go from one university to another.

At Cambridge young Donne made quite as deep a mark for himself as he had done at Oxford, and as years went on the pinions of his genius strengthened, until they bore him into the regions of

original composition. His verse was not, however, yet known in print.

John Donne's education had begun so early that it was completed at seventeen, at which age he left Cambridge, and entered upon the study of the law. He made no very great way in this profession. Looking back at his story as we do now, we see at once that it was entirely unsuited to his mind and character; he was not formed to climb the hill of hard drudgery which leads to legal distinction. But though he never became a judge, or even a man of note in law, his intellectual power soon asserted itself in a way more congenial to it. Before he was twenty he published a volume of poems, which got quickly into brisk circulation, and were greatly admired in his day, though they are too full of over-strained conceits and too stiff to suit our modern taste. There is, however, so much of the fire and melody of true poetry in Donne's verse, that every age must grant him the title of a poet. And in after years his sermons, which are real prose poems set to the music of strains from above, give him a yet higher claim to the name.

The popularity of his poems soon made for Donne a foremost place in the first society, both of rank and literature, and before long the young man was launched right into the very midst of the gayest scenes of the London of that day. He had no strong, firm anchor of religious faith to hold by, for Roman Catholicism, in which he had been brought up, did not at all satisfy his keen, manly brain. His young head was intoxicated by the incense which rose around him on all sides, alike in courtly halls and in circles where wit flashed brightly. No family tie exercised a powerfully sanctifying, purifying influence over him. No wonder, then, that this chapter of John Donne's life is a story of downfall and shadow. The man's whole nature was a nature of fire, it shone in his verse, it glowed in his eyes; there was fire afterwards in his repentance, in his burning Christian love, in his preaching.

Thus it came to pass, that at the period of his life of which we are now speaking, the period before God's grace had reached his soul, he threw himself passionately into the whirlpool of wild worldly pleasure. His laugh was loud at midnight revel, his step hastened daily to scenes of sensuous enjoyment, the wings of his spirit were, for a time, completely clogged by the dust and mire of earth.

But there was soon to come for Donne a day of waking, a day of lifting up. His Master above had set His seal upon him, had appointed that there should be for him prepared a warfare, for him woven a crown; his heart and mind began to rebel against the tyranny which he had allowed sin to gain over him, and he at length saw that hitherto his life had been, in reality, nothing but a living death. By ceaseless study of scripture, by prayer and earnest thought, he made his way out of the errors of the Church of Rome, and did not rest until he had got firm hold of the cross, the cross on which his grasp

never relaxed till his life's battle was over. His repentance was sharp and bitter, but there was no unmanly weakness about it. He rose up from it, still to wear its sting as long as he stayed upon earth, but resolved to be and to do something for the Captain under whom he had now enlisted.

Donne now renounced formally the Church of Rome and declared himself, heart and soul and mind, a Protestant; but he did not, at present, enter the Church, for as yet he did not think himself worthy. Another new influence—an influence full of mild warmth and radiant light—began also, at this time, to shine upon Donne's life, and, under God, to have a gentle yet enduring power in leading him into the upward road.

There met him one day in general society a young girl. No jewels flashed around her, telling of high birth or wealth; no rare sun of beauty shone in her face; no stream of sparkling words flowed from her lips. Yet was there about her, as she spoke or moved, a halo which drew John Donne constantly towards her. They became intimate, and out of friendship blossomed love in both their hearts. Family circumstances caused the marriage to be a private one, but, before long, men beheld a young wife sitting at Donne's fireside.

From that day forward Donne's home life was one long floating down a sunny river. He was a man who never did things by halves, and he gave his wife his whole heart. She used the precious gift nobly and well; and, as a true Christian woman should, she never faltered in one great, beautiful effort to help her husband to be brave and strong for God. Many children came to make the melody between the pair more and more full of sweet-toned harmony, and doubtless this pure, calm, domestic life helped, in a great measure, the process of highest change which was going on for several years in John Donne's soul.

Donne's life, though he had mixed in such brilliant society, had not been one to roll up gold for him and his; therefore, when children grew more and more numerous around him, and there were several mouths to be filled, something very like poverty began to stare him in the face. He had, however, many influential friends; one of these was Lord Drury, who gave him and his family a home, for nearly a year, in his house. Others who loved and valued him tried to gain for him royal favour, by introducing him to the King himself. James I., who, with all his many faults and weaknesses, always appreciated real talent when it came in his way, was at once charmed with Donne, and delighted in having him near his person. The King and all his other powerful friends pressed him to become a clergyman, telling him that such was the path in life for which he was best suited, and predicting that it would quickly lead him and his family to prosperity. But though he longed to become, in a special way, his Lord's true soldier, longed thus to have a wider

field for working and fighting for Him, he still, for some time, held back; the memory of his past made him feel that his hand was unworthy to take up the Gospel sword.

At length, when he had reached his forty-second year, he resolved to take Holy Orders; he felt that, in truth, a war-cry from above was bidding him step forward and take his place in the ranks, and he would no longer delay. He was shy and diffident, at first, about mounting the pulpit; he was old to begin to preach, and he was quite unaware of the power which lay in him.

His first sermon was preached at Paddington, at that time a little country village. Thither he stole one Sunday morning, unknown to most of his friends, and with a mind but ill at ease. He soon found out, however, that he was in his right place at last. Glowing words and vivid similes came upon his lips as if they flowed from some inexhaustible fountain, and his very first sermon made a strong mark on the minds of his listeners. He continued thus to try his strength in country churches for some time, riding out, in the Sunday sunshine or through rain and wind, to some little rustic temple of the Lord, where earnest, weather-beaten faces of simple labouring men and women, and bright, eager eyes of rosy peasant girls and lads were raised reverently towards him, longing for the bread of life; until, at length, Christ's knight had proved sufficiently his armour. Then the large and important living of St. Dunstan was offered him, and knowing now that, with God's grace, he was quite ready to undertake such a charge, he accepted it.

At St. Dunstan's, Donne preached and worked bravely, until, before long, the favour of the King and his own striking merits advanced him to a yet higher position. The way in which James announced this preferment to Donne is amusing, and very characteristic of that King and his dealings with those for whom he had a cordial liking. Let us glance for a moment at it, for it is a picture out of the moving panorama of those times.

One morning, as the wife of the Vicar of St. Dunstan's is going briskly through her household review, she is thrown out of all matronly composure by news being brought her, by a breathless servant-maid, that one of the King's lackeys is at the vicarage door, asking to speak with her. The damsel adds much that is animated, though a trifle confused, about the splendours of the royal messenger's dress, but her mistress does not heed her; she is so full of wondering awe about what this envoy from royalty can be come for. Had her John committed some terrible breach of etiquette the last time he went to pay his respects to his Majesty? What could it mean? She hurries out, the keys at her girdle making a little tremulous tinkle as she goes. And she is greatly relieved to find that it is only an invitation for her husband to dine at the palace to-morrow. Her spirits rise quickly, for this is, in truth, an honour that Donne has never enjoyed before, and with proud importance in her face and air,

the little woman runs up-stairs to brush the Vicar's best doublet, and otherwise prepare his clothes for the grand occasion.

The hour for the Vicar of St. Dunstan's to start for the palace arrives, an early mid-day hour in those times, when royalty dined at noon and supped at sunset. Mistress Donne bids her husband bring her back a full and particular account of every dish on the princely table, for she has a pretty taste in cookery, and very possibly she may be able to imitate some of them. If truth must be told, Donne's heart beats a little faster than usual as he draws near the door of the palace. He certainly knew something of court life, but to sit down and eat with royalty is a new experience for him. The first part of the ordeal is quickly over; he has passed through the long suite of gilded ante-rooms, and the lines of richly liveried servants. Now, of course, he will be ushered into the grand banquetting-hall. But how is this? Instead of finding himself in a spacious apartment, glittering with gold and silver plate and filled with guests, he is left standing alone in a little shabbily-furnished room that seems to belong to the back-stairs part of the palace.

Donne waits in silent wonder as to what this may mean, and various uncomfortable doubts and conjectures rise up within him. At length the door opens, and no less a person appears than the King himself. The clergyman casts an uneasy glance at his Majesty's face, but there is no frown upon it; it is full of an indescribable, suppressed something that is very like a smile, that will try to make its own way out and gleam about the lips and sparkle in the eyes. At first the King chats about the most commonplace subjects. The Vicar represses the pangs of hunger, which are beginning to get rather importunate, as best he can, and answers respectfully, and as a subject should. At length James says, with what for a monarch is terribly like a knowing wink: "I doubt, Master Donne, that you are wanting your dinner, but I am going to offer you a dish that will serve for dinner, I think, and for supper both. What do you say to the deanery of St. Paul's?"

This was the way in which Donne became Dean of St. Paul's. An honourable position and considerable worldly prosperity now were his; there was no need any longer to fear the biting blast of poverty for those he loved; it seemed that he and his were standing in the midst of calmest brightness. But just then came the darkest cloud of sorrow that ever burst over his earthly life. There is a story which says that this trouble was foreshadowed to Donne in a strange, supernatural way; it is given by many of his biographers, so we will tell it here.

One night Donne was sitting up in the library of a friend in the country, with whom he was staying. He had been absent from home but a few days, and he had left his wife and children all well and happy when he took leave of them. He had become absorbed in some old folio, and he sat on till the whole of the rest of the house

was sunk in silence and sleep ; no sound was audible save the wind rising, now and then, to breathe a long sigh, or the noise made by a falling cinder as it dropped from the dull red fire.

The student chanced to raise his eyes from his book and glance around the large room, which was all wrapped in dark shadows that folded themselves about the tall book-cases, and crept up and down the oak-panelled walls, and lay lurking in distant corners. There were only two bright spots, one made by the fitful glimmer of the fire-light round the hearth, the other by his lamp. Suddenly, amid the dimness at the further end of the library, he fancied he saw something moving. He looked and wondered, for he was certain no one had entered the room—besides, there was not a single inhabitant of the house up except himself ; he looked and wondered, and then concluded it was a passing illusion.

But no, there it was again, a white object, glimmering out amid the dimness. A great awe fell upon him he could not stir or speak. Slowly, out from among the shadows a white-robed female form glided into the light of the lamp, until the yellow rays fell full upon it. Then the form turned its face towards him, and Donne was gazing into the eyes of his wife. She was very pale ; her hair hung loosely round her ; she held a dead child in her arms ; she fixed on him one long, wistful look of love, and then she vanished. Next morning a messenger from London came hastening to the house where Donne was staying, with the sad tidings that Mistress Donne had died last night in giving birth to a dead child.

Thus Donne's home lost its sweetest music. He bore it, however, like a man and a Christian, and while he mourned her to the very end of his own earthly life, and never called another woman to fill her place, he brought up his seven motherless children well, and was unwearied in deeds of love and charity. There was no one in distress or sorrow near his cathedral who did not know something of the good Dean's sympathy and kindness, and the poor found in him a generous, ready friend.

Donne was perhaps one of the most eloquent men that ever stood in an English pulpit. The fire, the feeling, the passion, that rushed down in floods upon his audience, seem to have completely carried away his listeners ; his sermons were often of the most immoderate length, but they would sit on spell-bound, now weeping, now clasping their hands, swayed by his irresistible power as trees by the wind. His genius as a poet no doubt had much to do with his success as a preacher ; it bore him aloft into heights of inspired fancy, and clothed his thoughts in language of glowing splendour. When he had finished one sermon, he always immediately looked out a text for the next, and then carried it about in his head until he had built up a whole frame-work of thought and argument upon it. Thus he knew all his sermons by heart before he preached them.

Donne counted among his friends most of the men of intellect or

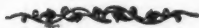
his time. As we look back at the deanery of St. Paul's, we hear echoing through it the deep roll of Ben Jonson's voice ; we see entering it the cold, polished dignity of Bacon ; we watch Donne in congenial communion with Bishop Henry King, the poet. All these forms are grouped around him, and, had we space for them, many more would crowd into the picture.

Donne wrote some beautiful and touching sacred poetry after he was a clergyman. One hymn of his own composition was a special favourite in St. Paul's, and was often sung by the choristers. His poetry before he entered the Church is occasionally stained by some degree of licence, but all that vanishes in his later verse.

Donne's health began to give way comparatively early. His often expressed wish was that he might die in the pulpit, and it was almost fulfilled. His last sermon was on the text, "In God are the issues of death," and men afterwards said that it was his own funeral sermon ; his frame was bent, his voice hollow, but he never produced a more deep and lasting effect on his hearers.

Before his death he had, following a strange fancy of his own, his picture taken wrapped in his winding-sheet, standing on an urn, and from this picture a statue was moulded, and set up over his grave. When the church was burnt down, at the time of the great fire, this monument was the only thing saved ; but it lay mislaid and neglected in a crypt under the new cathedral until it was found a few years ago, and given an honourable place, and now speaks to the London of to-day of her great poet-preacher.

ALICE KING.



IN THE MIST.

BY MARY E. PENN, AUTHOR OF "OLD VANDERHAVEN'S WILL," &c.

I.

"YES, Winnie, I say it, and I mean it—you are a cruel coquette. You know that I love you more than life itself, and yet you take a pleasure in tormenting me."

"It is you who torment me with your jealous suspicions, Noel, and your temper is simply unbearable. I warn you that you may try me too far."

This fragment of dialogue reached my ears one autumn afternoon as I—the Vicar of Penravan—was returning home across the heights after a long round of parochial visits.

The speakers stood facing each other, on the dusty, sunburnt turf at the edge of the cliff, too much absorbed in their quarrel to notice my approach. Not that my presence would have greatly disconcerted them had they been aware of it. I had known both Winnifred Carlyon and Noel Tremaine from childhood; had christened them, and should probably have the pleasant task of marrying them, if all went well—though the course of their true love did not seem to be running very smoothly at this moment.

It must be admitted that there was some ground for their mutual reproaches. Tremaine, who was a clever young mining engineer, had the quick temper which often goes with a warm heart, and the very strength of his affection made him jealous and exacting. As for Winnifred, her best friends could not deny that she was somewhat wayward and capricious, though so thoroughly lovable withal that those little failings, which time would certainly correct, might well be forgiven. She was the orphan grand-daughter and spoilt darling of the wealthiest man for miles round Penravan—old Michael Carlyon, the shipowner—and was, besides, as pretty a girl as you would meet in a summer day; with a complexion like a May rose, and eyes of the wonderful blue that seems peculiar to Cornwall—the deep, limpid, changeful hue of the western sea; whilst she never smiled but to reveal a set of teeth dazzlingly white and even.

Noel's stalwart form, and handsome, vivacious, olive-tinted face, made a picturesque contrast to her delicate beauty: a better matched young couple could not have been found in the Duchy.

Just now, however, neither of my favourites appeared to advantage. The girl was flushed and defiant, her companion white with anger. Hitherto their disagreements had merely been the "renewing of love," but in this there appeared to be something more serious.

"What, quarrelling again!" I exclaimed, looking at them severely over my spectacles. "When will you two learn to agree?"

They started and turned, both looking rather guilty.

"Noel has insulted me, Mr. Glynn!" Winnie declared, hotly.

"I have not—unless truth is an insult," asserted Noel. "I said that you ——"

"There's no need to repeat it," interposed Winnie.

"Excuse me," he returned. "As you have appealed to Mr. Glynn, it is only fair he should know what has passed. I said it was scandalous that you should encourage other men's attentions when you are my betrothed wife."

Winnie laughed provokingly, though her fingers trembled as she trifled with a spray of heather at her breast. "Is no one else even to look at me without your permission?" she asked.

"No one shall make love to you if I know it," he answered between his teeth.

"And pray who has done so?"

Tremaine hesitated a moment. "Walter Borlace, for one," he said at length.

Winnifred raised her pretty brows in affected astonishment. "Walter Borlace! why—I have known him all my life. We are almost like brother and sister."

"A little less than kin and more than kind," quoted Noel, with an angry laugh. "You know well enough that he is in love with you."

"I ——" Winnie began, then stopped short, colouring to her temples. "At any rate he has never told me so," she finished proudly.

"But you know it well enough, I repeat, and you encourage him."

"It is false!" she interrupted. "I have never encouraged him."

"It is *true*," returned Noel. "I have watched you, and I know it. I am not blind."

An angry retort rose to her lips, but she controlled herself.

"Yes, Noel, you *are* blind," she said, more gently. "You are blinded by jealousy, or you would know that, whatever my faults may be, I am not untrue or false-hearted. But you can think so if you choose," she concluded, raising her head proudly. "I will be indifferent to your opinion."

"You would not say that if you really cared for me," returned Noel, "but you don't. I have long thought your love is given elsewhere, and now I am sure of it."

Her lip quivered, but she said nothing, looking away from him across the calm, sun-lit sea. Noel gazed into her face as if he were trying to read her heart in it.

"Is it so?" he questioned, with fierce anxiety. "Have I lost your heart, Winnie?"

Her breath came quickly; she raised her eyes to his with a look

which ought to have convinced him to the contrary; but meeting his angry, suspicious gaze, her face froze again.

"You have not taken much trouble to keep it," was her reply.

He drew a quick breath and stepped back from her. "I see—it is as I thought," he muttered, with an expression in his eyes that almost marred the beauty of his face. "As such is the case," he resumed, speaking slowly and with difficulty, "I release you from your promise. I will not wed a woman whose heart is elsewhere. But listen"—he caught her wrist, bending his angry face close to hers—"if you will not be my wife you shall be no other man's. I will kill you first."

She drew back with a faint cry, turning suddenly pale.

"Tremaine, you forget yourself!" I interposed. "Your temper betrays you into conduct that you will blush for later. Threats and violence—for shame!" And, to do him justice, he looked ashamed already of his outburst.

"Come, come," I continued paternally, "you are both wrong. Temper on one side, pride on the other. Forgive and forget, both of you, and resolve that this shall be your last quarrel."

"That it certainly shall be," Winnie said quickly, but in a tone of resolution that was new to her. Her young face had a hard, resentful look that altered it strangely.

"You have given me my freedom," she continued, turning to Noel; "I accept it. Here is your ring. Henceforth you and I are strangers."

She held it out to him, and as he made no movement to take it, threw it at his feet, and went her way, with a firm step and erect figure, taking the road over the moor towards Borlace Court, as the old-fashioned manor-house was called.

Tremaine mechanically picked up the ring, and stood, looking after her, with a blank, incredulous expression, as if he hardly realised what had happened. The tempest of passion had passed as quickly as it rose, leaving pain and remorse behind.

"Do you think she is in earnest, Mr. Glynn?" he asked at last, in a tone of dismay.

"It looks very like it," I answered dryly.

"You think she really intends to take me at my word, and —— But, good heavens, I did not mean it! I was so maddened with jealousy I hardly knew what I said."

"You must have been mad indeed to believe for a moment that Walter Borlace had taken your place in her heart," I said.

"She did not contradict me," he muttered.

"Pride sealed her lips, but her face spoke for her, if you had had eyes to see."

He was silent a moment, looking down. His colour came and went; his face was troubled and remorseful.

"I have acted like a fool!" he burst out at last. "I know that

she is true at heart, in spite of her little coquetries, and I have driven her from me—perhaps for ever! What shall I do? Do you think she will forgive me? I will ask her pardon on my knees ——”

“I hope you will do nothing so ridiculous,” I interrupted. “It will be better policy to keep away for a few days, until she has had time to think it over, and then ——”

“And then, perhaps, I shall find that she has engaged herself to that fellow”—he nodded towards Borlace woods—“in a fit of pique. No; I will not eat or sleep till my ring is on her finger again. She is gone to the Court to tea; I shall wait here till she returns, and it will be strange if I can’t win her pardon for a few hasty words. She knows that my temper, and not my heart, was to blame.”

“You must learn to control that temper of yours,” I said gravely, as we shook hands, “or I fear it will lead you into terrible trouble some day.”

I little thought when I uttered that prediction how soon it was destined to be fulfilled.

He turned from me without replying, and I left him standing with folded arms on Penravan Cliff, while I went on my way home, pondering, with a bachelor’s amused perplexity, on the strange inconsistencies of “the passion called love.”

Five minutes’ walk brought me to the Vicarage—a low, square house of grey stone, facing the sea, while its back windows looked out over the broad purple moor. Between the house and the cliffs stood the church, a quaint, weather-stained granite building, said to be of sixteenth century architecture. In stormy weather its walls were often wet with spray, and in its crowded graveyard many a humble stone bore witness to the perils of those that “go down to the sea in ships.”

The most striking object in the view from my windows was the ancient Martello Tower on Penravan Cliff, locally known as the “Smugglers’ Keep.” The vaults beneath had once been used as a storing-place for contraband goods, and it was said that a subterranean passage connected them with the beach, but the entrance in the face of the cliff had probably long ago been blocked up by falls of rock. These slips were of constant occurrence, sometimes only consisting of loose stones and sand; but often great masses of rock, detached from the overhanging edge, went crashing and thundering to the beach.

The narrow footpath, passing the churchyard gate, wound along Penravan Cliff, and dipped abruptly into the wooded hollow which sheltered the village—one of the most picturesque on the Cornish coast. Its steep, zigzag main street went straggling down to the water’s edge, where it terminated in a little jetty of rough boulders and dark beams dripping with seaweed. The houses were, for the most part, low stone cottages, with deep doorways and slated roofs, and gardens where myrtle and fuchsia flourished luxuriantly; but on the wooded slope above were dotted not a few white-walled villas, among which

the shipowner's house, substantial and sturdy-looking like himself, showed conspicuously.

A couple of hours later, having dined and rested, I strolled out through my garden into the humble "God's acre" which adjoined it, and sat down on the low stone wall, under a twisted old thorn-tree. The glory of the evening had departed, and twilight was gathering over land and sea—a chill grey twilight, with something melancholy in its utter stillness. The sun had set in a hazy horizon, and now the cold sea mist was drifting inland like a ghostly veil, gradually blotting out the familiar outlines of the scene.

As I sat, smoking meditatively, and watching old Dan Tregallas, the sexton, who was digging a grave not far off, two figures approached along the path, looming suddenly out of the mist—Winnifred Carlyon and Walter Borlace.

The latter was a slight, rather effeminate-looking young fellow of two or three-and-twenty, with pale grey eyes and thin lips—as great a contrast to Tremaine in person as in character. There had always been a latent antagonism between the two men, which only needed a pretext to break into open enmity.

His expression, as he looked down into his companion's face, left little doubt as to his feelings for her. But Winnie did not seem to observe it; her eyes were bent on the ground with a downcast, troubled look. Neither of them noticed me, though they passed so closely to where I sat that I could not help overhearing a part of their conversation.

"Why do you look so sorrowful?" were the first words I heard, in Walter Borlace's soft, drawling voice. It seems to me that you ought to congratulate yourself on your escape. What chance of happiness would you have had with Tremaine—a violent, dangerous fellow, who——"

"He is nothing of the sort," she interrupted quickly. "You were always prejudiced against him, and for no earthly reason."

"And yet you told me just now that he had threatened your life!" exclaimed Borlace.

"He said some wild words in the heat of passion," replied Winnie; "but of course they meant nothing. I am very sorry I repeated them. I was the most to blame; I ought not to have provoked him to anger."

He glanced at her with an unpleasant smile. "I see—it is the old story. You have quarrelled just for the pleasure of making it up again."

She shook her head. "Not this time; it has gone too far," she said gravely.

"Are you sure of that?" he asked, taking her hand, and speaking for once without affectation. "Are you really free? Then, Winnie, I may say to you at last what has been on my lips many a time before, though you would never let me speak. I think you know what it is. You must know that I——"

Winnie coloured, and drew her hand away.

"Walter, please say no more," she interrupted. "I am not in the mood to listen just now."

His thin lips tightened. "Will you ever be in the mood?" he questioned.

"Some other time I may be—I don't know; but certainly not now." She put out her hand as she spoke. "Don't trouble to come any further," she added abruptly. "Good-bye."

"Are you offended with me?" he asked, bending to look into her face.

"No, but—but I would rather be alone."

"How white you are," he exclaimed, as they shook hands; "and you are shivering. Are you cold?"

She laughed uneasily. "No, it was only a nervous tremor. Someone is walking on my grave, as the country people say."

He lingered a moment, twisting his neat little blonde moustache as he looked after her; then, with a slight shrug, turned and walked slowly away in the opposite direction.

I watched the girl's retreating figure till the mist hid it from view, wondering if Noel was still waiting on Penravan Cliff, and whether there would be another angry scene when they met.

As the thought crossed my mind I was conscious of a strange, uncomfortable feeling, such as I have experienced sometimes in a troubled dream; a vague dread; a presentiment of some impending calamity which I was powerless to avert. I tried to shake it off, but it clung to me, assuming every moment a more definite shape.

At length, yielding to an impulse I could not understand, I swung myself over the low wall, and followed her.

The mist was now so dense that I was obliged to proceed cautiously lest I should stray from the path, which at some points is dangerously near to the edge of the precipitous cliff.

I had passed the spot where I parted from Tremaine, and was approaching the old tower, when a confused sound of voices reached me; voices I recognised, though the speakers were as yet invisible.

"Winnie, don't madden me! You know that I didn't mean what I said. Take back the ring."

"After you have insulted and threatened me? Never! No, you shall not force it on me; let go my hand—how dare you!"

"I dare anything rather than lose you."

"This is not the way to win me back. Let go my hand—you hurt me! Ah, take care, Noel! you will——"

The words broke off in a scream—a cry so wild and terrible that it went through my nerves like an electric shock. In another moment I was on the spot.

Tremaine was standing, rigid and motionless as a figure carved in stone, on the extreme verge of the cliff, gazing blankly into the depth below, where there was nothing to be seen but the drifting mist;

nothing to be heard but the wash of the incoming waves upon the rocks.

Where was Winnifred?

When I put the question in a faltering voice, and laid my hand upon his arm, he slowly turned his head and looked at me.

I trust I may never again see on a human face the expression he wore at that moment—the speechless horror and despair which seemed to petrify every feature. He tried to answer, but no sound came from his white lips. He mutely pointed down to the beach.

“Great heaven!” I gasped, “you do not mean that you—that she has fallen over?” He inclined his head.

“We were standing on the path close to the edge,” he began, in a low hoarse whisper. “I tried to force the ring upon her; she resisted and struggled to get her hand away. I loosed it suddenly—so suddenly that she staggered backwards, and—and before I could prevent it, she——”

His voice broke; a shudder ran through him from head to foot. He threw up his hands with a wild despairing gesture.

“I have killed her—I that would have died for her! I have killed her—my love, my darling! Well, it is but a step to join her.”

In another moment he would, in the frenzy of despair and remorse, have thrown himself over the cliff, but I seized his arm and dragged him back by main force.

As I did so, young Borlace came hurrying up, out of breath.

“What has happened?” he panted. “I heard a cry——”

“There has been a terrible accident,” I began, and in a few hurried words told him all.

He stared at me with an expression of incredulous horror, then turned his eyes on Noel Tremaine. “An accident?” he repeated slowly. “*Was* it an accident?”

Tremaine started, and raised his head. Their eyes met, and for a moment they looked at each other as if under a spell.

“Good heavens—you cannot believe that I intended——” Noel began, but reading the other’s dark suspicion only too plainly in his face, he left the sentence unfinished, and turned abruptly away.

“That is a shameful insinuation,” I cried warmly. “You know that Tremaine loved her too well to——”

“I know that he threatened her life this afternoon,” interrupted Borlace; “let him deny it if he can.”

Noel looked round. His face had frozen into a strange quietude.

“I do not deny it. It is true.”

“And a moment ago I heard you say that you had killed her.”

“But not intentionally!” I exclaimed; “it was an accident. Tremaine—speak! defend yourself from this shocking accusation. Do not let it be supposed that you are—a murderer!”

He shuddered, and covered his eyes with his hand. “I feel like

cne," he groaned. "But for me this would never have happened. Her death lies at my door ——"

"We do not yet know that she is dead," I returned, hastily. "While we are loitering here she may be lying insensible on the beach."

The suggestion—improbable as I felt it to be—had the effect of rousing him from his despairing apathy. The words had hardly left my lips when he turned from us, and hurried away, soon disappearing in the mist.

"If she has survived such a fall it is little short of a miracle," Walter Borlace remarked, as we followed.

"And you forget, Mr. Glynn, that the tide is at the flood. It will take us more than an hour to reach Penravan Rocks; by that time the waves will have carried her away."

I made no answer; I knew only too well that he was right, and my heart sank as I thought of all the misery that was to come.

The nearest way to the beach was through the village, where Noel had arrived before us. The news spread like wild-fire through the place (though none dared to carry it to Michael Carlyon), and half the population turned out to accompany us. There was some delay while the boats were put out, and lanterns and torches provided, and it seemed hours to our impatience before we reached the spot.

A light breeze had sprung up, dispersing the mist, and the moon and stars looked forth as serenely as if there were no death in the world, no sin or sorrow. The pale, pure light gleamed on Penravan Rocks, from which the tide had retreated, leaving them wet and bare; sparkled on the shallow pools between the boulders, showed every crevice and projection of the rugged cliff—but it did not show us the figure we hoped, yet dreaded, to see.

Noticing that there had been a recent fall of turf and soil from the edge of the cliff, some of the men set to work to remove the débris, while the others gathered round, hardly daring to think what piteous sight might be revealed. But they found nothing.

Hoping against hope we continued the search for hours, sometimes mistaking a patch of moonlight for a fair dead face, or a floating tangle of sea-weed for "a drowned maiden's hair,"—all in vain. Of Winnifred Carlyon, dead or living, there was no trace.

At length we prepared to return, but without Noel, who refused to leave the spot.

"I shall find her yet—something tells me that I shall," he muttered, casting a haggard glance round him. "Go—all the rest of you; I would rather be alone."

Walter Borlace gave him a curious look from his pale grey eyes, and seemed about to speak, but checked himself, and followed the others in silence.

"Who'll break the news to old Carlyon?" the men whispered among themselves, glancing furtively at me.

I knew that the sorrowful task would be mine, though I would have given much to avoid it. I dared not think of the grief and desolation the tidings would bring into the home which the sweet girl's presence had brightened.

II.

NOTHING travels so swiftly as ill-tidings, and nothing is more infectious than suspicion. Before another day had dawned the tragedy was known far and wide, and as the news spread, a vague shadow of doubt and distrust gathered round Noel's name. No accusation had yet been uttered, but on every side I heard the echo of Walter Borlace's doubting question—

"Was it an accident?"

Tremaine himself seemed unconscious of the whispered suspicion; unconscious of everything except his despair. All day long he was wandering on the heights, or by the margin of the "cruel, crawling foam," as if in the wild hope that the waves would give back what they had taken.

There had been a sudden change in the weather. A strong north-westerly gale was rising, and as I sat in my study at the vicarage that evening I felt the sturdy old house vibrate beneath the gust, while the rain beat against the panes as if it would drive them in. I was endeavouring, not very successfully, to concentrate my mind on the sermon I had begun when there was a tap at the door, and old Dan Tregellas, the sexton, entered, looking scared and startled.

"What is it?" I enquired. "You look as if you had seen a ghost."

"Something like one, Sir. Coming up from the village just now I met young Tremaine, and it gave me quite a turn."

"Where was he?"

"On Penravan Cliff, just about where the accident happened. He was walking fast, talking to himself. I spoke to him, but he didn't hear me; didn't even see me, though he passed close to me. He was staring straight before him like a sleep-walker, and his face was as white as this"—laying his finger on my writing-paper. "I doubt his mind's giving way, sir, and he'll do himself a mischief if he's not prevented."

I threw down my pen and rose.

"In which direction was he going?"

"Straight towards the Keep."

I drew aside the curtain and looked out. Dusk was deepening into night; a wild stormy night of hurrying clouds and driving rain. Enough light remained to show me the massive form of the tower, standing sentinel above the angry sea.

"Surely he doesn't mean to spend the night in that dismal place?" old Dan muttered at my elbow.

"He must not be allowed to do so. Fetch me a lantern and help me on with my overcoat; I shall go after him at once."

Five minutes later I sallied forth into the rain and darkness.

The moment I emerged from the house the wind swooped down upon me with a rush that nearly took me off my feet, half blinding me as it drove the sharp sleet into my eyes. I struggled on, however, fighting my way along, with bent head, and at length, out of breath and dripping with rain, I reached the tower.

In the days when it was used for contraband purposes, the lower part of the building had been roughly restored; the breaches in the wall stopped up, the windows barred across, and a massive door added, which now hung awry on its rusty hinges. The place had an uncanny sort of reputation in the neighbourhood, and nothing would have induced the superstitious fishermen to enter it after dark.

I pushed open the door and looked in, holding the lantern above my head. Its light showed me the figure of Noel Tremaine, standing motionless in the middle of the floor, as if he had stopped short in the act of crossing it. His face was turned towards the door, but he did not appear to see me. He stood in a listening attitude, his lips apart, his eyes fixed and dilated, every line of his face expressing strained and anxious attention.

What was it he heard? No sound reached my own ears but the roar of the wind and the murmur of the sea. A vague, half-superstitious fear crept over me as I watched him, but I shook it off and entered, closing the door loudly to attract his attention. But though the sound echoed through the place, it did not break the strange spell that held him. It was not until I touched his arm that he seemed conscious of my presence. Then he started violently, and looked at me with a wild, haggard stare, but expressed no surprise at my sudden appearance, and for a moment seemed hardly to recognise me. At length he drew a deep breath, as if waking from a dream, and laid his hand on my wrist.

"Do you hear it?" he asked, in a breathless whisper.

"I hear nothing but the wind and the sea."

"Not that—the sound is within the tower. Hark!"

I listened intently a moment, then shook my head. "It was the cry of a sea-gull."

"I tell you it is here, close to us, seeming to come from the ground beneath our feet," he persisted excitedly.

"What is the sound?"

His answer fairly took my breath away.

"Winnie's voice."

I looked at him compassionately. "You are dreaming, Noel! grief and excitement have unnerved you. Come out of this gloomy place; come home with me, and ——"

He shook his head impatiently.

"No, I dare not leave this spot. Something—an attraction I can't

explain—drew me to it in spite of myself, and just now, before you came, I thought I heard —— There again !” he broke off, seizing my shoulder. “ Good heavens ! is it possible you don’t hear it too ? ”

Was I infected by his delusion, or did I indeed hear a faint muffled cry, seeming, as he had said, to come from the ground beneath our feet ?

He had watched my face, and his own lighted up with a wild triumph.

“ Do you believe me now, or are we both dreaming ? ” he cried ; then, relinquishing my arm, he threw himself on the floor, beating the stones as if he would have torn them up with his bare hands.

“ Winnie—Winnie ! Speak to me—where are you ? ”

It was no delusion this time : no trick of excited fancy. A voice—not the “ wail of a soul in pain,” but the voice of a living woman, answered : “ I am here, in the vault ! Help—come to me ! ”

Noel sprang to his feet, with a cry that rang through the place. “ Ah, I understand ! Dolt that I was not to think of it before ! Mr. Glynn—the subterranean passage —— ”

I started, and looked back at him with a face as excited as his own. “ But—but how could she —— ” I began.

“ I don’t know. It is all mystery at present,” he interrupted ; “ but one thing is certain. By some strange chance she must have discovered the opening in the cliff, and made her way to the vault. The entrance is somewhere in the floor. Give me the lantern—quick ! ”

I handed it to him, and we anxiously examined the pavement, which was of square stone slabs, worn and uneven with age. In one of them, which appeared newer than the rest, was embedded a rusty iron ring. My companion pointed to it without a word, and set down the light.

The stone had become firmly fixed in its position, and it required the utmost exertion of our united strength to raise it. When, at length, we succeeded in removing it, a breath of damp cold air, charged with an earthy odour, came rushing up from the vault beneath.

Noel bent over the opening, gazing down anxiously as he swung the lantern to and fro. Its rays fell on what looked like a heap of light drapery, huddled together at the further end of the vault.

“ She is there ! ” he breathed ; “ but—but she does not speak or stir. Suppose—suppose we are too late ? ”

I took the lantern while he let himself drop into the vault, then handed it down to him, and watched him as he approached the motionless figure.

He bent over it, raised the drooping head, and turned the white face to the light. Then, with an inarticulate sound of mingled pain and rapture, he lifted the slight form and bore it towards the opening where I was waiting to receive it.

We took off our coats and laid her down upon them. I supported her head on my knee while he tenderly chafed her hands.

"Are we too late?" he faltered, looking up at me with a face hardly less white than hers.

"No, she has only fainted. Look, she is reviving already."

Even as I spoke she stirred uneasily, drew a deep breath, and unclosed her eyes. They wandered round the unfamiliar place, then rested on her lover, who knelt at her side, watching her with breathless anxiety.

The change in her face was something to remember. Light, life and colour rushed back to it in a sudden tide of joy that transfigured every feature.

"Noel, Noel!"

The next moment his strong arms were round her, and his lips pressed to hers.

"My love—my darling!" he whispered between his passionate kisses. "How can I thank heaven enough for its mercy in giving you back to me almost from the grave!"

"It would indeed have been my grave, but for you," Winnie faltered.

His face darkened with a look of pain and remorse. "If you knew what I have suffered since yesterday! the agony of self-reproach."

"My poor Noel, your face speaks for you," she interrupted, with a faint smile. "But you need not have reproached yourself; it was a pure accident."

"Are you badly hurt, my darling?" he asked anxiously.

"I am a little bruised and stiff—nothing more."

"You escaped without injury from that terrible fall," I exclaimed. "It seems a miracle."

"It was indeed little short of one," she answered gravely. "Let me try to tell you how it happened. After I fell from the cliff—was it only yesterday? it seems so long ago—I must have been unconscious for some time. When I recovered I found myself lying on a projecting ledge of rock, my dress entangled in a straggling brier. Though not injured I was terribly bruised and shaken, and the ledge was so narrow that I dared not stir for fear of falling again. I cried for help, but my voice was drowned in the noise of the breakers, and the mist hid me from your sight. As I looked up despairingly, thinking every moment would be my last, I noticed a hollow in the cliff just above me, like the mouth of a natural cavern, half-hidden by brambles and furze-bushes. The thought flashed across me that it must be the entrance to the old "Smugglers' Passage," and that if I could creep into it I should be safe till you found me. With some difficulty, for the opening was only just large enough to admit me, I succeeded, disturbing a whole colony of sea-gulls who had built their nests inside. But another danger threatened me, which I could not

foresee. I was beginning to get accustomed to my position, and to feel thankful for my merciful escape, when I heard a curious sound in the cliff above me—a cracking, rending noise. A quantity of loose stones and gravel came rushing down before the opening, half blinding me, and almost at the same moment I found myself in total darkness. A mass of rock and earth falling from the upper part of the cliff had blocked up the entrance, making me a prisoner. At first I hardly realised what had happened, but when I found that I was actually walled up in the cliff a dreadful fear seized me. Still I did not yet despair. I resolved to make my way along the passage, hoping to find another outlet in the tower. It was a steep incline, with rough steps at intervals, and it brought me, as I expected, to a vault. But, to my horror, I could find no outlet of any sort. I groped round the damp stone walls again and again before I could believe it, then sank down, as if stunned. I pictured you all seeking for me in vain; poor grandpapa's grief—Noel's despair. I thought what my fate would be, dying of slow starvation in the dreadful darkness of that living tomb."

She broke off, shuddering; then, after a moment's pause, went on again.

"The time dragged by till, from sheer exhaustion, I fell into a deep dreamless sleep, which must have lasted many hours. At length I woke with a start, thrilling in every nerve with a strange conviction that Noel was somewhere near me. I sat up, stretching out my arms in the darkness, calling to him, imploring him to come to me. When at last he replied, the sudden joy and relief overcame me, and I fainted."

"Never while I live shall I forget what I felt when I heard your voice," said Noel, in a low tone of deep emotion. "And yet it was scarcely surprise. I, too, had the same instinctive conviction that you were near me. My spirit was conscious of yours ——"

They clasped hands and were silent a moment; a silence I would not interrupt, for I saw they were blissfully oblivious of my presence.

"Noel," Winnifred whispered after a pause, in a tone half playful, half serious, and wholly tender; "when you offer me the ring again I shall not refuse it. I think you believe now that I love you—a little?"

"I was mad ever to doubt it, as Mr. Glynn told me. But you need not fear, Winnie," he added with a smile, "the 'green-eyed monster' will never come between us again. I have learnt a lesson in self-control that I shall remember all my life."

"Thus, out of evil comes good," I put in sententiously. "But listen; I hear footsteps outside."

There was a moment's pause—a sound of whispering voices, then the heavy door suddenly swung open, and Walter Borlace appeared on the threshold, followed by the old shipowner and two men, whom I recognised as police-constables.

Hastily signing to Tremaine to place himself so that Winnie's figure was hidden, I advanced towards the intruders, who seemed not a little astonished at my presence.

"What does this mean?" I enquired, looking from one to the other.

"It means, Mr. Glynn, that these men have a warrant for the arrest of Noel Tremaine," young Borlace answered. "We tracked him here, and ——"

"May I ask of what I am accused?" Noel interrupted, with a coolness which seemed to take them all by surprise.

Before the other could reply, Michael Carlyon stepped forward. He was a tall, stately old man, with silver hair, and a handsome weather-beaten face, pale and haggard just now.

"Noel," he began, in an agitated voice, "they tell me that—that you killed my darling in a fit of jealousy——" (there was a smothered exclamation from the background, which passed unnoticed)—"but now I look you in the face I can't believe it. It was an accident; you did not—you could not have intended to ——"

"Heaven knows I did not, Mr. Carlyon," the young man answered earnestly; "but I don't ask you to take my word for it. Here is a witness who will speak for me."

He stepped back, and showed—Winnifred, who rose hastily to her feet, and quickly sought the shelter of her grandfather's arms.

I shall not attempt to describe the scene which followed; old Carlyon's joy, Walter Borlace's amazement, and the bewilderment of the two police-constables, who suddenly found themselves *de trop*.

When the first excitement had subsided, Winnie, after describing how the accident occurred, repeated what has already been told—often interrupted by the questions and exclamations of her hearers. When she had concluded, she turned to Walter Borlace.

"Was it you, Walter, who first suggested that monstrous accusation?" she asked, in a tone which brought the blood to his cheek. He hung his head, muttering something inaudible. After a moment's struggle with himself, however, he turned to his rival.

"Tremaine, I don't know whether you can ever forgive me," he began, awkwardly enough, but with evident sincerity. "I feel heartily ashamed of my unjust suspicion, and ——"

"Let us shake hands and say no more about it," Noel interrupted, suiting the action to the word. "Even if I were disposed to resent it, my heart is too full of thankfulness just now to have room for any other feeling."

"Well spoken," said the old shipowner heartily; "you can afford to be generous, my boy. And now," he added, "the sooner we get home the better for this young lady, who is looking like a little ghost."

"You must please to consider the Vicarage your home, for to-night at least," I put in.

"Thank you, Mr. Glynn, that's kind. Can you manage to walk so far, my dear, or shall Noel carry you?"

Winnie essayed a few steps, then paused, looking white and faint.

"I think I shall have to trust myself to Noel," she said shyly, blushing as she looked up at him.

He stepped forward, nothing loth, lifting her as easily as if she had been a child.

"Yes, you may trust yourself to me, my darling," I heard him whisper as he passed out. "These arms shall guard and serve you faithfully all your life to come."

Winnie made no verbal reply, but the sigh of rest and contentment with which she let her head sink on his shoulder was an answer more eloquent than words.



FROM THE GERMAN.

AH, love me not! to no one here
Has love for me brought gladness yet;
Whatever light I held most dear,
In sorrow or in death has set.

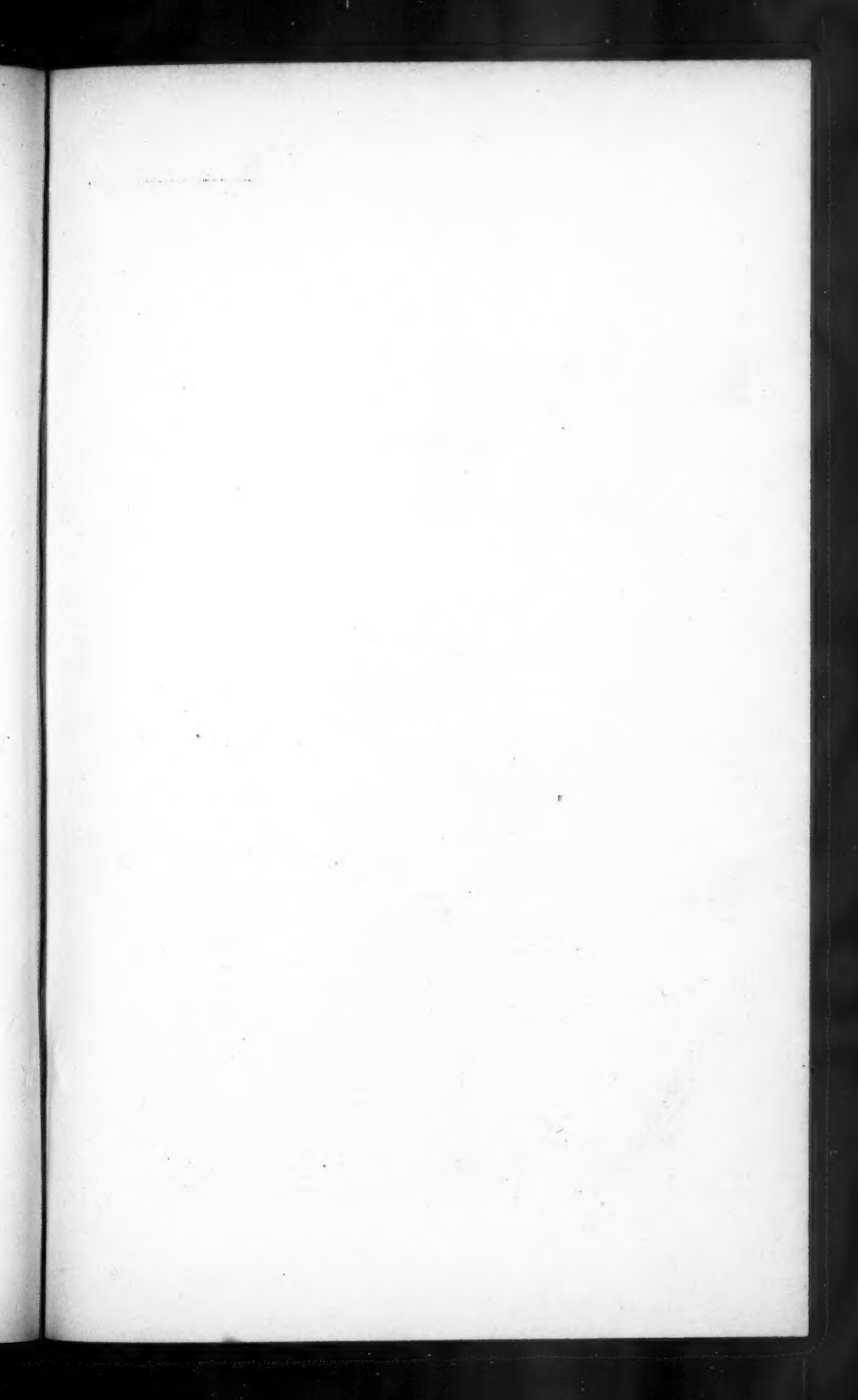
Leave me to tread my path alone,
Whether it lie through glow or gloom,
The radiance which thy love has thrown
Must fade before my coming doom.

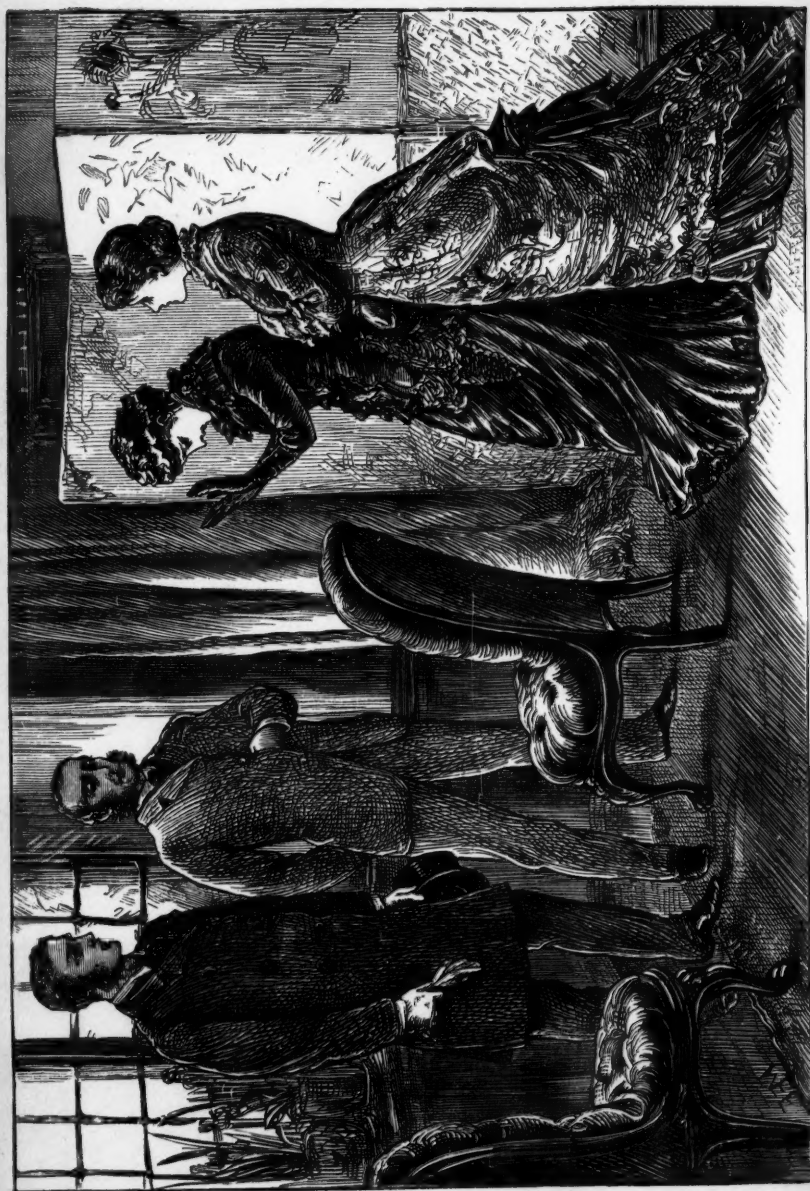
Since that fond heart has learned to know,
And spread for mine its priceless store,
Those eyes have lost their laughing glow,
That cheek's fresh roses bloom no more.

Shivers my soul with boding chill,
Whispers a voice I may not flee—
"Arm thyself! watch! remember still
Life and its dreams are past for thee."

Ah, dearest friend, if all should end
Sooner than thou wouldst have me go,
One flower, at least, at All Souls' Feast,
I lay on his grave who loved thee so!

A. H. D.





M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

FACE TO FACE.

R. AND E. TAYLOR.

NOTICE.

The next (DECEMBER) Number of the *ARGOSY* (*published Nov. 27th*) will be the **EXTRA CHRISTMAS NUMBER** of the Magazine, and will contain a **Complete Story by JOHNNY LUDLOW**, entitled "Mrs. Cramp's Tenant;" several Illustrated Papers and many other papers of interest.

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